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THE GIRL SCOUTS SERIES

The Girl Scouts in Beechwood Forest

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SHE ARRANGED TWO SUCH SMOKE COLUMNS

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THE GIRL SCOUTS SERIES

The Girl Scouts in Beechwood Forest

By
MARGARET VANDERCOOK
Author of "The Ranch Girls Series," "The Red Cross Girls Series," "Stories About Camp Fire Girls," etc.

Illustrated

THE JOHN C. WINSTON COMPANY
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CHAPTER I

FLAME

THE flame ascended, ending in a little spiral of smoke curling upward in the night air.

Overhead the stars shone, the pine trees formed dark shadows.

Within the radius of the firelight a girl leaned forward, her eyes fastened upon a drawing she held in her lap. One could see only vague outlines. The light danced over the figure of the girl, her bright, reddish-gold hair, cut short and held in place with an amber comb, her slender shoulders, the unconsciously graceful poise of her body.

She turned to glance anxiously at another figure lying outstretched upon the ground only a few feet away.

This girl appeared to be sleeping. Her eyes were closed and she was breathing fitfully.

Suddenly she opened her eyes and smiled.

"Tory Drew, aren't you ever going to sleep?" she demanded. "Is it your intention to sit up all night and keep guard over me?

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I told you that I was not suffering in the least. My fall seems not to have injured me, only for some strange reason has made it difficult for me to walk. We have been longing to spend a night out of doors alone ever since we arrived at our camp in Beechwood Forest. This is an unexpected opportunity, yet you do not look grateful. Small wonder if you are never going to sleep! What time do you think it is?"

Victoria Drew leaned closer toward the fire and looked at her wrist watch.

"It is half-past twelve o'clock, Kara. The witching hour over and I have seen no woodland spirits come to haunt us, and no human beings. I am afraid my signals have failed to attract attention. The other girls at camp must have decided to give us up for lost and await our return in the morning; I am sorry for your sake. Are you sure you are not uncomfortable?"

Tory arose and bent over her companion, not so convinced that the entire absence from pain, which Kara insisted upon, was absolute proof that she was not seriously hurt.

In the firelight the other girl's face appeared white and unreal. To any one so impressionable as Tory the past few hours bore a semblance of unreality.

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Early in the morning of the previous day she and Katherine Moore had set out from their camp in Beechwood Forest to spend the day alone among the hills. For some time they had been planning this excursion when the duties and amusements of camp life made a break possible. How differently from their plan and expectation this day had gone!

As Kara was beginning to fall asleep again Tory need no longer conceal her anxiety.

By the fire, now freshly piled with pine cones and branches, she sat down and propping her chin in her hands, gazed deep into the burning embers.

The night was very still, save for a light wind in the tree tops.

On the ground beside her, with a stone keeping them from blowing away, lay the result of her day's work. She had sketched all morning while Kara wandered about or else rested and read.

Before daylight they had wakened in their Girl Scout Camp in Beechwood Forest. By dawn, with their luncheon packed and her sketching outfit, they had set out to explore the heart of the hills, a purple rim bordering the far side of their own camping site.

During the previous winter in the small

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Connecticut village Tory faithfully had fulfilled her promise to her artist father. She had made no attempt to go on with her drawing and painting, devoting all her time and energy to her school, her new home and her Girl Scout Troop.

With summer had come the release from her promise.

These days of camping in the woods with the other Girl Scouts recalled the enchanting months outdoors she had spent with her father. Every green tree outlined against the summer sky, their canoes on the lake before the camping grounds, the Girl Scouts at work or at play, all were pictures Tory longed to transfer to line and color.

Until to-day the business of getting settled at their summer camp had left scant opportunity for artistic effort outside the camping arrangements.

Tory picked up the pile of sketches on the ground beside her. She studied each one carefully and then tossed it into the fire.

Her present work was valueless; she had become so hopelessly out of practice.

Finally her eyes rested on a single sheet of drawing paper. On the instant her expression altered. This sketch was not without

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worth. She had drawn it with pastels and in the light from the camp fire. The lines were crude and the colors too vivid, but it showed the figure of a girl lying on the ground, her eyelids closed, her figure expressing a curious quiet.

The lower part of the body was covered.

At present Tory Drew was without the khaki coat which she had worn earlier in the day. Beside the figure the smoke and flame of the camp fire formed light and shadow.

Tory sighed.

"At least this will serve for our camp log! The other girls can see how Kara looked during this interminable night. She will be able to write the account of her fall. I remember that I was diligently at work upon an impossible drawing of a line of hills when I heard the noise of a landslide. There was a sound of earth and rocks being torn from their foundation and tumbling and sliding down an embankment. I scarcely looked up. Kara had disappeared for a walk, so there was no one to whom I might mention the fact. Certainly I had no thought of associating the noise with her."

Again Tory arose. This time she moved farther from the fire, walking restlessly up

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and down toward the clearing which opened into a dark forest of evergreens.

The night was a mild summer night. There was in the atmosphere the coolness of the wooded places surrounding them.

Her fire signals had not been observed on either side of the hill. Tory's impression was that their camp of "The Eagle's Wing" lay to the west of the hill, although by no means immediately below it. On the eastern slope and nearer by was the Boy Scout camp. This camp the girls of her own Troop had been deliberately ignoring.

At present Tory realized that she would gladly accept aid from either or any direction.

Had Kara been well and awake, or if they had been able to dream beside one another, the long night would have proved a delightful experience.

From the depth of the woods an owl was crying. Tory repressed a slight shudder, controlling her nerves by an effort. The sound recalled the vague moaning that first aroused her to any knowledge of Kara's accident. Once more she could see Kara lying at the bottom of a tiny precipice. Her face was covered with rocks and earth, but there was no sign that she had fallen any distance or been seriously hurt.

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Now in retrospection Tory could see Kara smiling up at her in the old humorous fashion. She could hear her voice with the gentle drawl that had attracted her so strongly at their original meeting.

"Most extraordinary thing, Tory darling. I slid off that small embankment a short time ago, bringing most of it along with me. I was considerably bumped and I presume bruised, but not hurt. However, I decided to lie still here for a while until I recovered my nerves and disposition. Then I tried to climb back to you for consolation and found that my legs *would* crumple under me in the most absurd fashion. So I fell to making disagreeable noises so you would come and find me. What are we going to do, Tory? I can't walk and I weigh too much for you to carry."

Yet she must have carried her, or else Kara must have been able to walk a little! Somehow they had managed to reach this clearing nearer the summit of the hill. Here a fire signal could be more plainly observed.

Six hours had passed. Not for five minutes had Tory allowed the fire signal to die down. No one had replied either by another signal or by coming to their rescue.

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Fortunately Kara slept the greater part of the time. Now that the night was fully advanced she would be more comfortable where she was than carried down the mountainside, where there was no well defined path. One had to seek the easiest way between the trees.

For her own part Tory concluded that she might as well attempt to sleep for as long as her fire could be trusted to continue burning.

The pine wood was filled with brush and the night so bright she could find without difficulty what she was seeking.

Returning, Tory smothered over the fire so that it might burn for some time without replenishing. She then lay down beside Kara.

Toward morning she must have dreamed. She woke with the impression that a number of years had passed, or what seemed a long passage of time, and in the interval she and Kara had been searching the world over for each other and unable to meet.

Glad she was to reach over and touch her companion, who scarcely had stirred.

Already the sky was streaked with light, palest rose and blue.

Strengthened and refreshed, Tory set to work again. The summer morning was

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exquisite, the odor of the pine trees never so fragrant, nor the air so delicious.

Failing in her signals for help the evening before, she now determined to make a more strenuous effort. Intending to return to camp before dusk, she and Kara had neglected to bring a flashlight or a lantern which might have proved more effective.

With the coming of darkness she had not relied on solid columns of black smoke being seen at any distance. Now on a farther ridge of the hill she arranged two such smoke columns, remembering that two steady smokes side by side mean "I am lost, come and help me."

If she failed a second time, she determined to go down the hill until she was able to secure aid. But this meant leaving Kara alone, which even for a short time she did not wish to do.

The waiting was the difficult task. To her own embarrassment Tory realized that she was thinking more of her own hunger than of Kara's need as the minutes wore on and no one arrived. Fortunately she had saved a small quantity of coffee in their thermos bottle the day before. This must be for Kara when she finally awakened.

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There was nothing to occupy one save to rise now and then and stir the hot ashes to a fresh blaze, covering them afterwards with the green wood of the small beeches that straggled up the hill away from the shadow of the pines.

The noise of footsteps up the mountainside actually failed to arouse Tory until they were not far away.

She first heard an exclamation from Kara. She had not been so sound asleep for the past hour as she had preferred to pretend.

Kara sat up, her arms outstretched as if she were a child begging to be lifted up.

Tory started toward her. She then turned and ran forward with a cry of relief. Had Fate allowed her to choose her own and Kara's rescuers she would have selected the two figures now appearing at the brow of the east side of the hill. They wore the uniforms of Boy Scouts and were the brothers of one of the girls in her own Patrol. They were also her own intimate friends.

"Don, Lance!" Tory exclaimed, a little breathless and incoherent. "How in the world did you find this impossible place? Kara and I have been fearing we might have to stay here always!"

Don held out his hand and caught Tory's,

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giving it a reassuring pressure. He was a big, blue-eyed fellow with fair hair and a splendid physique.

In contrast Victoria Drew appeared small and fragile and incapable.

Lance McClain was entirely unlike his brother in appearance. He was dark and small. He went directly to the girl who seemed most to require his help.

As she struggled to rise at his approach and was not able, Lance knelt down on the grass beside her, while Kara explained what had occurred.

Never, Tory Drew decided, would she forget the aspect of their own camp in Beechwood Forest, when an hour or more later she, in the lead, caught the first glimpse of it. It was as if one had struggled through one of the circles of Purgatory to reach Paradise at last.

Actually a few lines from Dante that her father had recited many times returned to Tory's memory:

"My senses down, when the true path I left;
But when a mountain foot I reached, where closed
The valley that had pierced my heart with dread,
I looked aloft and saw his shoulders broad
Already vested with that planet's beam,
Who leads all wanderers safe through every way."

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The way had been difficult with Kara helpless.

With their arms forming a kind of basket chair and Kara's arms about their necks, Donald and Lance had moved slowly down the hillside.

Once Tory became aware that Lance looked almost as ill and exhausted as Kara herself.

Don's color continued as ruddy, his eyes as blue and serene and his expression as steadfast as the moment when they had set out on the descent of the hill. To call attention to the fact that Lance was less able to endure the fatigue, Tory knew from past experience would anger him.

Curious that no one in their own camp appeared to have been alarmed by their night's absence!

The morning bugle must have sounded more than an hour before. The early drill was over.

By the open fire Tory now beheld Dorothy McClain and Louise Miller preparing breakfast.

Placing her hands to her lips she uttered their Scout signal call.

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CHAPTER II

LOOKING BACKWARD

A FEW minutes later Donald and Lance McClain were standing in the open space before the Girl Scout camp. They were facing a number of the girls and their Scout Captain, Sheila Mason, as well.

Slightly in the background and yet within hearing, Victoria Drew waited.

Kara was lying on the cot inside her own tent. Tory's friends had suggested that she follow Kara's example and allow breakfast to be brought to her. Surely she looked weary enough after a night of such anxiety!

Tory had her own reasons for declining. Now as she overheard the beginning of the conversation she was glad of her own decision.

"We are sorry to have intruded upon you even for a short time, Miss Mason," Donald McClain protested. "We know that you have asked that no member of our Scout camp come within your boundaries this summer. Of course you appreciate that the present circumstances left Lance and me no

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choice. Last night Lance insisted that he saw the light from a fire on one of the hills which he believed was a signal for help. The rest of us talked him out of the idea. The fire was plain enough, but we were under the impression that some one was spending the night on the hill-top and had kindled the fire either for cooking or companionship. Lance is an obstinate chap and was not altogether convinced. He arose at dawn and discovered the two smoke columns. He wakened no one but me. We set out and were lucky enough to find Tory and Kara without much trouble. We must say good-by to you at once. The other fellows will not know what has become of us, as we can't reach our own camp for another two hours."

Impulsively Tory Drew made a little forward movement. She then observed Lance's eyes fastened upon her with the half-humorous, half-quizzical expression she frequently found annoying. What was there in the present moment to amuse him, save her own intention to come immediately to Donald's defense? He so rarely made a speech to any stranger so long as this one to the Girl Scout Troop Captain. When the four of them were together, she and Dorothy McClain,

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Lance and Don, Lance often accused her of talking for Don.

At this instant, however, Sheila Mason extended her hand toward Donald with a friendly gesture.

"We have been anxious for the opportunity to explain to you and Lance that in asking the Boy Scouts not to pay visits to our camp this summer, we did not intend to include you. We have talked of this to your sister, but Dorothy has had no opportunity, she tells me, to speak of it to you. We realize you could not have taken part in the rude behavior of the other boys the night following our making camp here at the border of the forest."

Sheila Mason, the Troop Captain of the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing, was only about ten years older than the youngest member of her Troop.

In the early morning sunlight she looked charming in her brown khaki skirt and white blouse. Her long, light hair was braided close about her small head, her fair skin tanned by the outdoor life of the past few weeks, and color brighter than at any time in her life.

It was now midsummer, with days of unusual heat and nights of enchanting coolness.

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There was no trace of severity in the Troop Captain's manner or appearance, but Donald McClain flushed uncomfortably and closed his lips into the obstinate lines Tory so well recognized.

She wished Dorothy for a moment would be less faithful to her task of preparing breakfast. Mingling with the other outdoor fragrances, the odor of the coffee gave Tory a sensation of momentary faintness from sheer hunger.

Don had squared his shoulders. Not sixteen, he was nearly six feet in height and splendidly built.

"You are mistaken, Miss Mason. I was with the other Boy Scouts the night we came over to your camp. We meant to frighten you a little and to find out a few of the mistakes you were pretty sure to make on your first camping venture, nothing worse! We had no idea you'd take a little teasing so seriously. Some of us may not have behaved as well as we should, but nothing for the girls to have made a tragedy over."

Donald was not intending to offend the Girl Scout Captain more deeply, but tact was not his strong point.

Why did Lance fail to come to his brother's

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rescue? Tory flashed an indignant glance at him. He possessed, when he wished, the gift of expression his brother lacked. Lance's occasional moods of silence were due either to disappointment or anger.

Arriving a stranger in Westhaven the winter before, among Victoria Drew's first acquaintances were Dorothy McClain and her six brothers. Their father was the leading physician in Westhaven and an old friend of her aunt and uncle. They were neighbors as well.

In the beginning Tory had believed she preferred Lance to any of the other boys. He was Dorothy's favorite among her brothers, a delicate, musical chap, partly admired and partly scorned by the five who were stronger and more matter of fact.

Lance's passion for music, of which he knew but little, his desire to be left alone, his failure in most athletic sports, the rest of his family found annoying and amusing.

Lance McClain alone was like his mother who had died some years before, the others like Dr. McClain.

"Lance, why in the world don't you help Don out? You know he will only make things worse if left to himself." Tory whispered at this moment.

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"Want to save Don at my expense? All right, Tory," he answered quizzically in the voice and manner Tory never really understood.

Lance moved forward and now stood close beside Miss Mason.

His golden-brown eyes and his sensitive mouth relieved his face from plainness, although he was considered the least good looking member of his family.

At present he was smiling in a charming fashion.

"See here, Miss Mason," he began speaking slowly, "I don't suppose you can imagine what a difficult thing it is to have a brother who is always putting you in the wrong? Oh, not intentionally, but by everlastingly doing the right thing and then trying to take the blame for your mistakes!

"Don did not want us to come to your camp and make a scene. He is our Patrol leader and we should have done what he advised. Only we wouldn't and didn't! He came along at last more to keep the rest of us out of mischief than because he wanted to be in it."

Lance drew his brows together so they became a fine line.

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"Wonder if I've got to make a clean breast of the whole business? Don is everlastingly forcing me to play up to him when I would not otherwise. The suggestion that we hike over to the girls' camp and see what was going on originated with me. Don and I had been telling Dorothy you would never get things in shape over here without help from us, or men in the village. Your Girl Scout Troop has been claiming that you could accomplish all the things we do and a few other things beside. We did not believe you and wished to see for ourselves. I was sorry and mad as Don when some of the fellows went too far. We had a call-down from our Captain and have been looking for a chance to apologize. Do try and forget it, won't you? If your Girl Scouts will swoop down on us unexpectedly and be double the nuisance that we were, we are willing to call it square."

Sheila Mason laughed. Margaret Hale, the Patrol leader and one of Victoria Drew's intimate friends, who had joined the group during Lance's speech, shook her head. She was a tall, serious looking girl with clear-cut features and a graceful manner.

"Lance, I don't believe a Boy Scout Troop is supposed to employ a lawyer. You strike

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me as a special pleader. You had better go in for the law instead of music. We are not so cranky that we would have objected to an ordinary descent upon us, even with the idea of showing us what inferior creatures we are. But when it comes to trying to frighten us, and some of the more timid girls were frightened, you behaved as if you were wild Indians."

Lance held up a white handkerchief.

"This is a token of complete surrender. We ask the courtesy due the defeated, Miss Mason. Please don't allow Margaret to rake up the past. Don and I must be off now to camp. Sorry you won't give us a message of forgiveness to carry back. May we speak to Dorothy? Evidently she is more interested in her breakfast than in her brothers."

"Nonsense, Lance, you and Don must have breakfast with us before you leave," Miss Mason answered. "I cannot bury the hatchet, Indian fashion, because the Girl Scouts must decide themselves whether or not you are forgiven."

Approaching in their direction at this moment, her face flushed and holding a long toasting fork in one hand, was Dorothy McClain.

She was only a year and a few months

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younger than her two brothers and looked very like Don, save that her hair was chestnut and her eyes a darker blue.

"Don, Lance, how glad I am you had the good luck to come to Tory's and Kara's aid! I have made a double amount of toast and there are six more eggs added to our usual supply for breakfast. I thought you would appreciate this sisterly attention more than rushing to greet you at once. I saw you were not lonely."

"Good to see you, Dot. You are looking in great shape, only we must be off at once," Donald answered, still appearing uncomfortable and obstinate.

Between Dorothy and Tory Drew a signal was flashed of which no one of the small group save Lance McClain was aware.

"Please stay, Don," Tory begged, moving forward and standing beside him. She scarcely came up to his shoulder. "Edith Linder has gone to Miss Frean's cottage to ask her to come to Kara at once. She is to try to telephone for your father. If not, one of us must ride in to town for him. But perhaps he might want you to be here when he arrives in case there is anything to be done, if Kara has to be lifted. Oh, I don't know

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anything, except that I am dreadfully worried over her."

Don softened.

"Oh, of course if there is any chance Lance or I can be of further use we'll be glad to stay. You ought to go to bed, Tory, and not wait for father."

Tory shook her head. Her face was whiter than usual from anxiety and fatigue, yet Donald McClain liked her appearance.

His brothers and other people might insist there were several girls in the Girl Scout Troop of the Eagle's Wing far prettier than Victoria Drew—Teresa Peterson, with her half Italian beauty, his own sister, Dorothy, Joan Peters, with her regular features and patrician air. Don knew that Tory possessed a charm and vividness, a quickness of thought and a grace of movement more attractive to him than ordinary beauty.

Forgetting their companions, they walked off together, leaving the others to follow.

"If you only knew how I have been longing to show you our camp in Beechwood Forest, Don! Please say you think it is wonderful," Tory pleaded.

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CHAPTER III

THEIR CAMP

THEY were seated along the edge of the lake, six girls and their two visitors. The water was a still, dim blue reflection of the sky with one deep shadow from the hill of pines. Away from the hill and the lake stood the forest of beechwood trees.

In an open space on a little rise of ground half within, half without the forest, lay the summer camp of the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing.

A little brown house built of logs was almost entirely covered with vines, a tangle of woodbine and honeysuckle and wistaria. Only from the windows and the door had the vines been cut away. The house looked extremely ancient, older than the slender beeches that formed a semicircle to the rear and left. Beyond the door, thick with deep green shade on this midsummer morning, towered a single giant beech which appeared to have moved

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out a few yards from its forest shelter to act as a sentinel for the log cabin.

The cabin had been erected so many years before that no one in the vicinity remembered its origin. Finding the location an ideal one for their camp, the little house had been restored, the chimney to the single fireplace made over, the glass added to the window frames, open spaces between the logs replastered.

The log house formed the center of the camp.

On each side at irregular distances were three tents, one row advancing from the forest, the other receding into it.

To-day there was an unusual stillness about the camp itself at an hour of the morning ordinarily a busy and active one.

Now and then some one appeared, hastily accomplished whatever the task and vanished.

Even the little group on the shore of the lake continued unusually quiet. When any one did speak it was with a lowered voice.

Five of the six girls were occupied. Only Tory Drew's hands were idle. They moved frequently with unconscious gestures characteristic of her temperament and the fact that she had lived a number of years in the

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Latin countries where the hands are used to communicate one's meaning as well as speech.

She made a sweeping movement of her hand at this instant, appearing to include the lake, forest, hillside and the small group of tents about the evergreen cabin.

"You have not yet said, Don, that you consider our camp superior to yours, when I am perfectly convinced that it is, without having laid eyes on yours. Lance has given me the impression that he agrees with me. He has not exactly said so in any words I can recall, but he can be tactful when he likes. You are always so tiresomely silent, Don, whether you think a thing true or not true. I always know when you are most silent your opinion is the strongest one way or the other."

Don was silent. Yet he knew the group of girls were awaiting his reply with almost as great interest as Tory.

Finally he smiled in a handsome, good-humored fashion.

"Don't see why you should object to my not talking a great deal, Tory, when it gives you and Dorothy and Lance more opportunity."

He turned around, however, studying the

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little camp in the shadow of the old forest with careful scrutiny. Donald McClain did not think quickly nor could he express his point of view until he had given a subject serious consideration.

"I don't see any comparison between your Girl Scout camp and our own, Tory," he returned at length. "The two camps are not in the least alike. In the first place, you tell me that you have only fourteen Girl Scouts and we have nearly forty boys. Of course things look neater and more picturesque here, with girls one expects this. Our problem is different. I have an idea we have more discipline and do more hard work."

Tory Drew looked annoyed.

Dorothy McClain took up the defense.

"I am not so sure of the work and the discipline, Don. We do everything at our camp, the cooking, washing and cleaning. We have been pretending that we were members of Penelope's household. If you have never read the 'Odyssey' you won't know what I am talking about. Joan Peters we sometimes call Penelope. She is everlastingly at her weaving, but does not unravel her web at night that she has woven in the daytime. She is not troubled by Penelope's importunate

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suitors. Tory at present is the Princess Nausicaa, the daughter of the King Alcinous, who conducts the family washing as a part of her work. I won't bore you with all our distinguished titles.

"As for discipline! I don't mean to be rude and I am glad you did not wish your Troop of Scouts to descend upon us like a band of Indians on a group of pioneer women. Still, I would scarcely be proud of such discipline."

"See here, Dorothy, what is the use? You know you are reflecting upon me, not upon old Don. But with my well-known amiability I forgive you. Whose idea was it that you pretend to be Greek heroines as well as American Girl Scouts?" Lance inquired in the tone that nearly always brought peace.

"Oh, we have not gone into the idea seriously," Joan Peters returned. Her head was bent over the square frame she held in her lap, her fingers busy with the strands of flax. "Miss Frean comes to camp every few evenings and reads aloud to us. She insists that we are too frivolous in our own summer reading and wishes to read us something we ought to remember."

Joan Peters liked Lance McClain. She was a great reader and perhaps because of his

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more delicate health Lance did not feel the same scorn of books that Donald affected.

With a swift movement Tory arose suddenly. Apparently she forgot the group of friends close about her. She clasped her hands tightly together, her eyes suddenly looked larger and darker, her lips twitched.

The Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing had chosen silver and gold as their camp colors.

Near the spot where Tory was standing lay two canoes. One was golden in color with an eagle's wing in silver on the bow, the other the opposite color scheme. Tory's own khaki costume looked golden in the sunlight. The water was now silver.

Don had a fleeting impression that Tory intended to jump into one of the canoes and disappear from sight.

Now and then she affected him curiously. He never knew what she intended to do or say. She thought so quickly, moved so swiftly, and he was stupid and slow.

At the present moment he was puzzled and troubled by her sudden look of intense unhappiness. The instant before she had been arguing the respective merits of the two camps and had appeared cheerful as usual.

"What is the matter, Tory? You are the

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most startling person! You upset one," Teresa Peterson protested.

She glanced toward Donald and then toward Lance McClain for their attention or approval.

Teresa was unlike the other Girl Scouts. She was extremely pretty with dusky hair that curled about a low forehead and soft rose colored cheeks. She gave one an impression of sweetness and yet one could not be sure of her actual character. She seemed always anxious for attention and the approval of other people. Several of the girls in her Patrol felt that Teresa was unnecessarily self-conscious before a masculine audience.

At this instant Tory Drew returned her glance. Her face showed bewilderment.

"Why, Teresa, how can you ask what is troubling me? Is one of us thinking any other thought? Of course we have had to talk of other things, but nothing matters except what Dr. McClain may at this moment be deciding about Kara. You know we all care for her more than any other girl at camp. She has had so much more to contend with than the rest of us even before this.

"She thought first of our camp in Beechwood Forest and we used to talk of it when

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it did not seem a possibility. The day of her accident Kara told me the past few weeks had been the happiest of her life."

Tory walked away from the others.

"I have been trying to keep my word and stay here with you until after Dr. McClain had seen Kara. Now I cannot wait any longer. I am sure something more dreadful than any of us realize has happened."

Margaret Hale rose and slipped her arm inside the other girl's.

"We will go back together. You are more nervous over Kara than need be because of the strain of last night."

They moved on a few yards.

Coming out of the cabin they could see Dr. McClain, Miss Frean and Sheila Mason. Dr. McClain, assisted by the two women, was bearing Kara in his arms.

Before Margaret and Tory reached them, he had placed Kara in his motor car and they were driving away.

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CHAPTER IV

RIGHT ABOUT, FACE

TORY toiled up the long, hot street, her arms filled with packages, her face flushed.

How different the atmosphere from the cool green shade of Beechwood Forest!

At the end of the street upon a rise of ground stood the Old Gray House. This had been Katherine Moore's name for the house, accepted and used by the town of Westhaven. To-day it appeared what it actually was: the village orphan asylum.

No longer could Kara's optimism conceal reality from Victoria Drew.

The house showed blistered and bare of paint. The open space of yard, green and fresh in the springtime, when she and Kara oftentimes sat outdoors to dream and plan, was now baked brown and sere.

The children playing in the yard behind the tall iron fence looked tired and cross, a little like prisoners to Tory's present state of mind.

She had come in from camp early in the

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day and had spent several hours at home with her uncle, Mr. Richard Fenton. Their own house was empty save for his presence. Miss Victoria had gone for a month's holiday to the sea.

After a talk with her uncle and an hour's shopping, she was now on her way to call upon Kara.

She saw a mental picture of Kara's small room on the top floor of the Gray House. How proud Kara had been because she need share her room with no one!

And what a place to be shut up in when one was ill!

For Kara's sake Tory had endeavored to view this room with Kara's eyes. Kara loved it and the old Gray House that had sheltered her since babyhood, her refuge when apparently deserted by the parents she had never known.

Victoria Drew was an artist. This did not mean that necessarily she was possessed of an artist's talent, but of the artist's temperament. Besides, had she not lived with her artist father wandering about the most beautiful countries in Europe* until her arrival in Westhaven the winter before?

*See "Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing."

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If this temperament oftentimes allowed Tory to color humdrumness with rose, it also gave her a sensitive distaste to what other people might not feel so intensely.

With half a dozen of the children in the yard of the Gray House, Tory now stopped to talk a few moments. Never before could she recall wanting to see Kara so much and so little at the same time.

Of the two children who had been Kara's special charges and her own favorites, only the boy remained.

His eyes bluer and more wistful than formerly, Billy Duncan came forward to speak to Tory.

He seemed older and thinner and less the cherub she remembered.

The children who were his playmates could have told her that Billy had altered since the departure of his adored companion, Lucy Martin, the little girl who had been adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Jeremy Hammond a few months before.

Lucy Martin had been an odd little girl, full of fire and passion and wilfulness. Blindly and adoringly Billy had followed her until her departure from the Gray House.

Afterwards he never spoke of her or asked

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for her, although at first she often demanded his presence and came to the Gray House to see him. Of late, however, Lucy had ceased to appear.

"Do you miss Lucy?" Tory inquired at this instant and was sorry for her own stupidity.

Billy merely shook his head. He always had been a dull little boy. One had been fond of him because of his sweetness and placidity, not for any brilliance.

Slipping a gift inside Billy's pockets, Tory ran on up to the Gray House, comforting herself with the idea that the little boy was incapable of feeling anything deeply.

The fact that Lucy had lost her affection for Kara, who had been like a devoted older sister, was more serious.

The door stood open so that Tory entered the wide hall of the old house without ringing the bell. She had come often enough during the past winter and spring to be a privileged character.

At the bottom of the long flight of stairs she paused a moment. Warm and out of breath, she did not wish Kara to guess at her rebellious mood when she arrived at the little room up under the eaves.

"You won't find Kara upstairs in her old

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room. Let me show you where she is," a voice called, as Tory placed her foot on the first stair.

The big room had been a back parlor in the days when the Gray House had been the residence of a prosperous farmer. This was before the village of Westhaven had drawn so close to it.

By the window in a wheeled chair sat a small figure crouched so low that had she not known it could be no one else, Tory would scarcely have recognized her.

Since her night and Kara's together on the hillside only a week had gone by. Could one week have altered Kara's appearance and her nature?

Her impulse to go toward the figure and gather her in her arms, Tory carefully repressed.

Kara's expression, as she raised her eyes at her approach, was almost forbidding.

Tory also repressed the exclamation that rose to her lips.

How white and thin the other girl's face appeared! The humorous, gayly challenging look with which she had met former trials and difficulties had vanished. The lines of Kara's mouth were tired and old, the gray eyes with the long dark lashes, her one claim to beauty, were dark and rebellious.

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"You have taken your own time to come to see me, Tory. I have been here at the orphan asylum nearly a week and this is the first time you or any member of my Girl Scout Patrol has honored me with a call. I can't say I altogether blame you. It certainly is pleasanter at our camp in Beechwood Forest than in this place!"

Tory's arms went around Kara's shoulders, her bright red lips touched the other girl's brown hair.

"You know I have wanted to come to you every minute in the twenty-four hours, dear, and every member of your Patrol has wanted to come as well, besides Miss Mason and Miss Frean and all the rest. To-day I am regarded as the most privileged person in the camp because I am first to see you. Dr. McClain only consented last night to allow me to come. I am to bring you everybody's love and to demand that you stay away from camp only the shortest time. Otherwise we intend to call on Dr. McClain in a body and assert our authority as Girl Scouts to bring you home to Beechwood Forest. Anyone save a doctor would know you would sooner grow strong again there than here."

As she talked, partly as a relief from ner-

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vousness and to hide her consternation over Kara's changed appearance, Tory was moving about the room arranging her gifts.

In a vase filled with water from a pitcher standing on a table she placed a bouquet of faded wild flowers.

The room became fragrant with the scent of wild hyacinths, ragged robins, cornflowers and daisies. By a low bowl piled with peaches and grapes, she put two magazines and a new book.

"Uncle Richard sent you the things to read, Kara. I should like to have brought more, but could not manage to carry them."

Still Kara made no reply. She scarcely had glanced at the offerings.

"Sorry the flowers are so faded. I think they will look better after a time. I had not the cruelty to decline to bring them, as Edith Linder and Teresa Peterson rose up this morning and gathered them in the dew to send you. I have brought our camp log for the past week."

Conscious of the wall between herself and her companion, Tory was aware that she was talking of trivialities until the moment when Kara would admit her inside her closed citadel.

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How long before she would speak a second time?

Walking over toward Kara, Tory took a low seat beside the wheeled chair.

With a swift gesture of affection she placed a square book on Kara's lap. The book was of heavy paper, golden in color back and front and with silver-gray leaves inside. On the outside cover was a painting of an eagle's wing.

"This is the first time we have ever had a written history of our week at camp, Kara dear. But we decided the other night at our Troop meeting to arrange this to bring to you. So whatever we dropped into the big box in front of Miss Mason's tent we put inside this book. I have made some sketches and Joan Peters has written a poem dedicated to you. Please look for yourself, won't you?"

Kara turned away her eyes.

Still Tory had no sensation of anger, only a kind of nervous fear. More than any one who ever knew her could have imagined here was a different Kara!

She now pushed aside the little magazine with a gesture of annoyance.

"I don't want to know what you have been doing at camp, Tory. I never want to hear any mention of our Girl Scouts again. You

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must erase my name from our Patrol list and find some one else to fill my place."

A valiant effort, Tory's to smile, when in the other girl's voice and manner there was so much to make smiling difficult.

"When that day arrives, Kara, I presume I also shall wish to resign from the Girl Scouts. It is hard to imagine when we both care so deeply. Has anyone or anything offended you? Do you feel I am responsible for your accident? If you realized how many times during the past week I have wondered if this were true. I did ask Miss Mason for permission to allow us to go for the day alone. I told her that I could sketch so much better without any companion save you. She reproaches herself now as much as I do and says as our Troop Captain the mistake was hers. But we promised not to go far from camp and were accustomed to the neighborhood."

"Don't be stupid, Tory. I have not forgotten that I first suggested the plan to you. We wanted a day to ourselves."

Kara had spoken. At least this much had been accomplished, although her tone remained hard and uninterested.

Suddenly her head went down until her face was hidden.

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"Don't you know, Tory, darling? Has no one told you or the other Girl Scouts of our Troop? Dr. McClain promised me that he would tell you. I can't come back to our camp in Beechwood Forest, I cannot be a Girl Scout. I may never be able to walk again. No, I do not suffer, I never have suffered, that is the dreadful part of it."

Kara's hands now clutched the other girl's shoulders.

"Tory, don't look at me like that. It may not be true always."

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CHAPTER V

A DISCUSSION

"THE land that is always afternoon," Joan Peters quoted dreamily.

Twelve girls were seated in a circle in a clearing in Beechwood Forest. Save for the fact that fallen logs formed their resting place here was a modern American "Agora of Mycanae," the well polished circle of stones, where the earliest of civilized peoples sat for council and judgment.

The afternoon sunlight slanted through the deep polished green of the trees.

A few moments before, the other girls had been earnestly talking, then had ensued a thoughtful silence and Jean's irrelevant speech.

"I never have understood exactly what that expression means, but it always has had a fascination for me," she continued. "Please don't think I am forgetting what we have been discussing this last hour. To my mind there can be no two ways of looking at it. The only problem we have is Kara. And, thank goodness, we do not have to decide what is wisest and best for her."

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Seated beside Joan, Tory Drew remained oddly still. Quiet either of body or mind was an unusual phase with her. Life and movement were her natural characteristics, more marked than with most girls.

"I wish I could think as Joan does, that the decision does not rest with us and we *must* be content," she added finally. "I feel as if I *knew* it was the only thing for Kara to come back to us and as if no one and nothing could induce me to think otherwise."

"Not a very sensible point of view, Victoria," a voice answered.

In the tone there was a different enunciation. In the voice there was a different emphasis from the other Girl Scouts. Besides, no one of them ever spoke to Tory without using her abbreviated title.

The girl who had made the remark was different in manner, appearance and costume from the rest of the group, although not conspicuously so. Martha Greaves was an English girl who had crossed the ocean early in the summer with Tory Drew's father and step-mother to spend the summer in Westhaven. She was singularly tall with light brown hair and gray-blue eyes.

After she had spoken she appeared a little

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embarrassed as if she regretted having called the attention of the other girls to her presence.

At the beginning of their acquaintance Martha and Tory had felt drawn toward each other. The differences in their temperaments appeared not as a barrier, but an interest.

But with the opening of the camp in Beechwood Forest, Tory had neglected her responsibilities. Her affection for Katherine Moore had made her less mindful than she should have been of a stranger in a new environment.

Fortunately Martha Greaves was an English Girl Guide. She was wearing the uniform of the Guides at this moment. Shy she might appear upon suddenly expressing her opinion, yet assuredly she had made a number of friends among the Girl Scouts. Moreover, she was too vitally interested in the differences between the two organizations, the Girl Guides of England and the Girl Scouts of the United States, to be especially self conscious.

She understood and liked Tory's impulsive nature with its capacity for romantic affection, so unlike her own. She considered herself to be a matter-of-fact person with only a few enthusiasms.

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At Martha's sensible statement Tory had the sensation of being suddenly plunged into cold water.

A moment she was nonplussed and slightly angry. Then she had the good sense to realize that Martha had not intended to be unkind. What she had said was undoubtedly true.

If she were rarely sensible at any time, Tory appreciated that she had become less so since her last talk with Kara.

Not an hour since had the problem of Kara been out of her mind.

Indeed, since the news of the result of what had first seemed a simple accident had reached the camp of the Girl Scouts in Beechwood Forest, the entire summer to which they had looked forward so joyously seemed to offer only disappointment.

They were only fourteen in number and Kara was individually dear to each one of them. Seven of the group were in Kara's own Patrol, the others, members of her Troop of the Eagle's Wing.

If they suffered some disadvantages over the larger summer camps for girls they had the advantage of a peculiar and intimate feeling for one another. The fact that Martha Greaves was the one outsider added a special

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interest. Rarely a half day passed that one of the Girl Scouts did not make some inquiry of Martha concerning their respective organizations.

She was glad enough to answer and they were learning from each other.

The Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing had worked at their scouting during the past winter with pleasure and faith, but occasional meetings could not bring the results these past few magical weeks at camp had accomplished.

All day long they were outdoors, at night the tent flaps were oftentimes left open for a better view of the sky and the feel of the wind.

All their own work had they undertaken and life had never appeared more practical, simple and delightful.

Then like a cloud darkening the serenity of their summer had come the news of Katherine Moore's accident with its unexpected, tragic result.

Tory Drew sighed.

"You are probably right, Martha. I have been told often enough by Aunt Victoria and sometimes by Kara herself that I have too great an opinion of my own judgment, when in reality my judgment isn't very good.

"Yet this time I simply can't feel that I

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am mistaken. Kara will be happier here at camp with us than at the Gray House or in a sanitarium. We all understand her and will do anything in the world to make her happier. Dr. McClain says that Kara's state of mind worries him a great deal. Yet how can it be different? Surely we can make her physically comfortable in the evergreen house and all of us will wish to wait on her. I—"

Tory hesitated and could not go on.

"I agree with you entirely, Tory," Margaret Hale answered sympathetically. Tory's Patrol leader, a dignified girl of gentle breeding, she was not the most gifted member of the Patrol, yet possessed the greatest personal influence. One could always trust to Margaret's sense of justice. She was never prejudiced and never unfair.

"I feel as Tory does. If there is nothing the doctors can do for Kara at present, save to watch her carefully, she had far better be here with us. I know they will do everything that is possible at the Gray House; I know too that Mr. Fenton has offered to pay Kara's expenses should the doctors decide she had best go to a sanitarium. Yet will either of these places alter Kara's state of mind?

"Since Tory told us of her talk with Kara

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I have scarcely been able to think of anything else. Kara, with her optimism and humor vanished; Kara, hard and bitter and wretched! It seems so incredible! Why, she has always faced her difficult existence with such courage. When one thinks of Kara it is to recall the humorous expression of her eyes, the laughter that always was waiting its chance. No one ever had so gay a laugh as Kara!"

Unconscious of what she was doing, at this instant Tory jumped up. Leaving her seat she stood alone in the center of the circle looking toward the other girls.

The first rays of the sunset slanted through the trees, turning the green to gold. One ray fell directly upon Tory Drew, her bright, red-gold hair, her thin, eager face and graceful figure.

About her the other girls were more in darkness.

There was almost a mystic quality in the late afternoon atmosphere, here in the heart of an ancient woods, with no one near save the circle of Girl Scouts.

"Margaret has suggested just what I want to make clear to all of you. The old Kara for the time being seems to have disappeared. And perhaps for the reasons Margaret has mentioned.

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"Kara has had too much to bear. She has always made the best of the fact that she had no parents, no family! Cleverer and sweeter than anyone, she was found in a deserted house with no explanation as to why she had been left there.

"Kara found happiness in the life at the Gray House because everybody cared for her at the asylum and in the village. But she was always thinking that the day was coming when she would be able to earn her own living at some congenial work.

"Now, Kara told me the other day that this hope has been taken from her and she sees nothing left. I am frightened about her. The doctors tell her she may walk again some day, but not for a long time. She insists this is only to encourage her. If we, her own Troop of Girl Scouts, can do nothing for her, I don't see who can."

Louise Miller, seated beside her most intimate friend, Dorothy McClain, uttered an unexpected exclamation.

Under ordinary circumstances she talked less than any one of her companions. Usually it was conceded that Louise alone among all of them thought of what she was going to say before making a remark.

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She was not good looking. Her features were heavy and she had grown too rapidly. She had peculiar light gray eyes under thick dark brows which held a kind of fascination. Yet Louise's only real claim to beauty was a mass of coppery, red-brown hair.

She was not happy or congenial with her own family. They were poor and her mother, a pretty woman, resented Louise's lack of beauty as well as their poverty. On Louise's part there was no effort to conceal the fact that she had been happier these past weeks at their Girl Scout camp in Beechwood Forest than at any time since she could remember.

"There is something to be considered in this situation beside Kara," she began, with a kind of awkward earnestness. The statement had not a happy sound, but the other girls waited, knowing that Louise had an odd fashion of expressing herself. One could not at first be altogether sure of her meaning.

"We must remember that it is not for Kara's sake only that we are to keep her here, if Dr. McClain agrees it will be wise, but for our own sakes as well. While Tory has been talking I have been wondering if we were equal, as Girl Scouts, to the test.

"You look surprised, Tory, as if there

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could be no question save the joy of having Kara to take care of and her pleasure in being with us. There will be other sides to it. Some one of us will always have to stay with Kara day and night. She must never be left alone for any length of time, when we may be wanting to go off together on a hike or a swimming party. It may be hard now and then to be left out. We must not expect Kara always to be cheerful and patient."

Louise had been looking toward Tory Drew. She now turned her head and her glance traveled from one face to the other.

The group of girls, except for a few additional ones, was the same that had gathered in the old Fenton home in Westhaven on a momentous evening the winter before.

On that evening they had formed the first Patrol of the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing Troop. Margaret Hale remained the Patrol Leader and Dorothy McClain her Corporal. The other girls were Victoria Drew, Joan Peters, Louise Miller, Teresa Peterson and Katherine Moore. Edith Linder had been asked later to become the eighth member and so complete the favored number.

To-day, amid the outdoor council in the woods, there were four girls from a second Patrol in the same Girl Scout Troop.

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"Honor, loyalty, duty, a sister to every other Girl Scout, courtesy, cheerfulness. These are some of our Scout principles. I wonder if bringing Katherine Moore here as an invalid to be cared for by us would not put our Scout principles into a crucible?" one of the four remarked unexpectedly.

Tory Drew frowned upon her, and then realizing the truth of what she had said, her expression changed and she nodded agreement.

Why should she expect that all the other girls must appreciate as she did the degree of Kara's misfortune and the necessity to do something to make her lot easier without delay.

The girl she was looking down upon always had amused Kara and herself. She was so unlike any of them. Her light hair was almost as short as a boy's and was boyish in appearance, save that it curled in an almost babyish fashion. Her eyes were wide open and a light china blue. Here her doll-like attributes ended. She had a short, determined nose, a square chin, and a large mouth filled with small, even teeth.

She had an odd, boyish name as well, Evan Phillips. No one knew a great deal about her. She had come with her mother to live

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in Westhaven the winter before in order to go to school. She had spoken of living in California before that time. A member of a Girl Scout Patrol in the west, she had asked to be admitted into the Eagle's Wing Troop in Westhaven.

The three other members of the second Patrol were Julia and Frances Murray and Ann Fletcher.

"What is a crucible, Evan?" Tory inquired. "I don't care in the least how many of our Scout principles are cast into it, if only Kara is here at camp with us. I know what Louise means, but no one need be troubled. If Kara will permit it, I shall wish to be with her always."

"You will not be allowed, Tory. Remember, Kara is our friend as well as yours, and we have known her longer," Dorothy McClain and the other girls protested, almost in the same words and at the same instant.

"Suppose you do not argue any more for the present," a quiet voice interrupted, the same voice that so often gave Tory the sensation that she had been quietly and politely restrained from too great intensity.

"I am sure I hear some one coming, three people in fact."

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It was slightly annoying to the American Girl Scouts that in many ways their English guest had a better outdoor training than any one of them. However, this was not her first camping experience.

A moment or so later Dr. McClain appeared at an opening between two of the trees in the encircling grove. He was accompanied by Sheila Mason and Miss Frean. The two women remained outside. Alone Dr. McClain entered the charmed circle. At once a dozen girls were crowding about him.

A quarter of an hour after Tory Drew and Dorothy McClain were walking with him toward the road that led back into Westhaven.

"We will have the little evergreen house made comfortable for Kara. Miss Mason and all of us have decided she will be safer and easier to care for there than in one of the tents. You are sure it will be best for her? She must become stronger and in better spirits being with us," Dorothy McClain insisted, clinging to her father's arm as if she were unwilling to let him go. "I declare it is wonderful to have a Girl Scout doctor—father!"

Dr. McClain made a sound half pleasure, half displeasure.

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"So this is what I have come to after more than a quarter of a century of hard work, a Girl Scout Doctor! Hope you girls may have no further need for me. Hard luck about little Kara. Things may turn out better for her later on. By the way, you and Tory do not know, and perhaps had best not mention it, but the very log cabin where you are planning to install Kara is the house where the child was found deserted years ago."

"But gracious, Dr. McClain!" Tory argued, "I have always been told that Kara was found in a deserted *farmhouse*. Our evergreen cabin was never a farmhouse. Mr. Hammond once spoke of finding Kara when I was with them, and he was not aware that Kara was the child he had discovered.

"Then Jeremy Hammond does not know a farmhouse when he sees one. The house was a deserted hut in those days where no one had lived for a great many years. That is why the mystery was the greater. A bridle path then led past the door and joined a road that was a short cut into Westhaven. The path is now overgrown with grass.

"I remember very well, because I came out myself next day to see if Hammond, who was a young fellow, may have overlooked any

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method by which we might trace Kara's history. Save for the piece of paper pinned to the child's dress and bearing her name no other information was ever forthcoming. Good-by, here is my car waiting. I'll bring Kara out myself in a few days. Remember, this is only to be an experiment. If she is not happier and does not improve we must try something else. Much depends upon you. 'Be Prepared'."

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CHAPTER VI

"THE CHOROS"

IN the open space a solitary figure was dancing.

The enclosure was not the circular place where the Girl Scouts held their councils, but deeper in the woods, although not a great distance away.

The space was larger. Instead of being surrounded by giant beech trees, a new grove of young beeches was here growing up to take the places of older trees that had died or been cut down. Their slender trunks were high and arched, their branches curved downward. They seemed to stoop, as young things that have grown too tall for their own strength. The green of their leaves was paler and more transparent. Underneath the trees the ground was covered with a finer, softer grass.

The girl was dancing barefoot. She wore a thin white dress. On the ground not far away was the khaki costume which she must have discarded for the time being.

Her hair was short and fair, and she had a

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square, determined, lightly freckled face. She was short and her figure not particularly graceful in repose. Watching her dancing one thought of neither of these things. The square head with the light fringe of curling hair was perfectly poised, the body showed strength and lightness.

At this moment the girl was moving in a wide circle inside the fringe of young beeches. Her arms were extended above her head; at regular intervals she poised and stood upon her toes, then danced more rapidly. At length, with a little fluttering movement like a swallow about to alight, she dropped on the grass, her arms covering her head.

From a short distance away came exclamations of pleasure.

Stiffening with surprise, anger, and what might have been alarm, the small figure arose.

Tory Drew, pushing a wheeled chair with a good deal of difficulty, slowly advanced. Seated in the chair was Katherine Moore.

"Evan, I am sorry we have intruded upon you and stopped your dance. It did not occur to me until this moment that you did not hear us approaching. Kara was bored and I thought if I could manage we would come down here to our 'Choros.' Isn't it learned

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to have called our dancing ground by the name of the first dancing grounds ever discovered and built by Daedalus, the famous artificer of Crete? However, we are obliged to give Miss Frean the credit for most of our erudition.

"We will go on again to the lake as soon as I have rested a little. May I say that it was wonderful to see you? I did not dream that any one of our Girl Scout Troop could dance as you do. I am sure Kara must have enjoyed watching you. So you will forgive my not having told you we were near."

The girl in the wheeled chair lifted her head.

"I wonder, Tory, why you think I enjoy seeing another person dance? Isn't it hard enough to sit everlastingly watching you walking, swimming, doing whatever you wish, while I am more helpless than a baby? Naturally it affords me *especial* joy to behold another girl who can do all these other things and dance like a wood nymph besides!"

In the young voice there was a note that made her companions stare helplessly toward her and then drop their eyes as if they were responsible and ashamed.

"Kara, dear, it is my fault. Things always seem to be my fault, I am so stupid these

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days! I never realized that you would mind the dancing. I had forgotten how much you used to care for dancing. Besides, I did not suppose we would find any one here, and thought we could enjoy the cool and the quiet.

"Good-by, Evan. You *are* a wood nymph. Kara was right."

Tory had placed her hands on the back of the wheeled chair and was about to move on, when again a querulous voice interrupted:

"Oh, no, let us not go at once. You are always tiring yourself to death for me these days. Don't think I never overhear Miss Mason and the other girls speaking of it, Tory. One learns to hear more than one should in my position. I was not always an eavesdropper. Neither did I suppose you would have to be a martyr for my sake, Tory. I wish you would try not to be; a martyr is a noble character, but one does not wish one for a constant companion."

Tory Drew made no reply. Instead she shoved the heavy chair into a cool, green shelter and dropped down on the ground beside it.

The other girl followed, anxious to be useful and not knowing what she should do.

A week had passed since Kara's return to her friends in their Girl Scout camp in Beech-

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wood Forest. The Kara who had gone away after her accident and the Kara who had come back seemed two utterly different human beings.

The courageous, gay, sweet-tempered girl was now rebellious, fretful, impatient. Indeed, she had become more difficult than any one who had known her previously could have imagined.

The little group of Girl Scouts were being tested, and more than any one of them, Tory Drew. So far not once had she faltered. Knowing Tory six months before, one could scarcely have believed this possible. Always she had been sweet and charming, but self centered and spoiled. Now, was it her affection for Katherine Moore or the months of her Scout training that had given her a new spirit?

"Suppose you tell us how you learned to dance in that beautiful fashion, Evan? Then, if Kara wishes, perhaps you will dance for us again?"

The girl with the odd, boyish name gazed at Tory Drew reflectively. Since their arrival in camp she had conceived a deep admiration for Tory. She had never spoken of it to any human being. Tory possessed this charm, of

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which she was unconscious, which was to gain her friends all her life.

Evan sat down on the ground nearby.

She was a year younger than the other two girls. At this moment, in her shabby, simple white dress, she appeared a good deal younger.

"Would you really like to know about my dancing? I have been wanting to tell some one. It would be absurd to pretend I had not been taught, no one with any judgment would believe me. Besides, when one is a Girl Scout I do not think one desires to keep secrets from the other girls. Perhaps you won't approve of me afterwards, but I shall run that risk."

Tory laughed.

"You are a dear! I approve of nearly every one. What could there be to object to in your wonderful dancing? Don't you know every girl who sees you must envy you."

A little fearfully Tory glanced upward toward Kara.

Had she been tactless again? Everything she said or did appeared the wrong thing these days.

At present apparently Kara was not looking or listening to either of them. Her gray eyes, which showed so wistfully in her thin

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face, were fixed on a far-off line of the sky between two clumps of trees.

"Well, you might as well hear the worst at the start," Evan went on, smiling and revealing her small, even teeth.

"In the first place, I received my ridiculous name because my father died a short time after I was born. It was intended I should be a boy, so I was named for him. We were poor and mother had to make her own living and mine. She did not feel troubled over this because she had studied dancing and loved it. So she gave dancing lessons in California, and before I was two years old I was a member of her class. We never would have stopped save that mother was ill and we were forced to come east to consult a doctor. We came to Westhaven to live so she could be near New York and I at school. Mother is better, and next winter intends to begin teaching again."

"So you wish to be a dancing teacher?" Katherine Moore asked. The other girls were under the impression that she had not heard what they were saying.

Evan jumped up quickly.

"Never, I should hate it! I mean to study folk dancing and some day originate new

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dances that shall be as American as possible. We talk of the folk dancing of the Irish and Spanish, and the Austrians and the Dutch and any number of other nations. When we speak of American folk dancing it is supposed we dance like the Indians. I don't see why we can't create a national folk dance of our own."

Evan made a cup of her hands and dropped her chin into it.

"Please don't laugh; I think an American folk dance might be like these young beech trees. I know that sounds absurd. What I mean is, the dance should show youth and freshness and grace, beautiful things like a primeval American forest. Oh, I don't suppose you understand me. I am sure I don't quite understand myself!

"Since I have been at camp Miss Mason has allowed me to come here an hour each morning to practice. May I show you the dance I have been trying to compose. I don't mind if you laugh at the dance or at me, I do it so badly. I shall learn some day. I like to call it 'The Dance of the Young Beeches'."

Without waiting for Kara's or Tory's agreement, Evan was up and away. Slowly

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she again circled around the beautiful dancing ground, her arms and body waving with gentle, fanciful undulations.

Now and then she seemed to be swept by light winds; again a storm pressed upon her and she bowed and swayed as if resisting with all her strength. Afterwards, wishing to suggest that the storm had passed and the sun was shining and the birds singing, she tiptoed about, her arms gently undulating, her face looking upward.

The dancing was crude and yet would have been attractive to eyes more accustomed to trained dancing than Tory's or Kara's.

Tory's first sensation was one of pure, artistic pleasure. Then glancing at Kara she felt a deeper joy. A moment Kara appeared to have forgotten her own misfortune. She looked more interested, more entertained than in many days.

"Don't you think, Evan, that if your mother is well she might be persuaded to come to your camp and teach us dancing?" Kara demanded, as if she too could be included in the lessons. "I know when we first decided to have our camp in Beechwood Forest one of the things we talked of doing was learning outdoor dancing. We hoped Miss Mason

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would be able to teach us. She only knows ordinary dances, and insists she does not even know the newest of these. She has not gone into society since the death of the young officer to whom she was engaged," Kara confided. "Sometimes I wonder if being Captain of our Girl Scout Troop has not helped her almost as much as the rest of us?"

She stopped abruptly.

Farther off in the woods the three girls heard a strange sound.

It was as if some one were calling. Yet the noise was not the Girl Scout signal.

Ten minutes later, on the way back to camp, unexpectedly the three girls beheld Teresa Peterson hurrying on alone. She looked surprised, even a little frightened, by their appearance.

When Tory inquired where she had been, as Teresa made no reply, the question was dropped.

No one was supposed to leave the camp without special permission from the Troop Captain. There was no reason, however, to suppose that Teresa had not received this permission.

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CHAPTER VII

OTHER GIRLS

THE other girls in the camp in Beechwood Forest were not passing through so trying an ordeal as Victoria Drew and Katherine Moore, after Katherine's return to camp.

Sympathetic they were with Kara's misfortune, yet upon them it did not press so heavily.

Frankly two of the girls acknowledged that the few weeks at camp were the happiest of their entire lives. These two girls were Louise Miller and Teresa Peterson. Neither of them was particularly congenial with their home surroundings.

An odd contradiction, Louise Miller was oftentimes so quiet, so slow and awkward in her movements that many persons regarded her as stupid. This was never true among the friends who knew her intimately, if for no other reason, than because of Dorothy McClain's attitude. From the time they were children the two girls had admired and loved

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each other, notwithstanding the difference in their natures. Dorothy was one of the happy persons whose attraction was so apparent that few natures resisted it. She was handsome and straightforward and sweet tempered. One girl in a family of six brothers, she had learned a freemasonry of living, and had not the sensitiveness and introspection that troubles so many young girls. Her mother was dead, yet she and her father had been such intimate friends that she had not felt the keenness of her loss as she must have under different circumstances.

Indeed, Louise Miller, whose parents were living, endured a deeper loneliness.

There had never been any pretence of anything else. Her father was a business failure. This had narrowed and embittered his nature. He was devoted to his wife but to no one else.

She had cared for society and beautiful surroundings and been forced to do without them. To have Louise, her oldest child, another disappointment, was difficult to bear.

If Louise had been pretty, if she had appeared to be clever, if she had cared for her home life and been anxious to assist her mother with the younger children, Mrs. Miller would have been quick to appreciate

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any one of these characteristics. But Louise was not handsome, she insisted upon disliking every character of household work, and her position at school was not always above the average. In certain classes she did excel. Louise herself was the last person who could have explained why there were days when she was so absorbed that she seemed more than ordinarily dull even in the subjects that somesometimes interested her.

She was never a favorite with her teachers or with strangers. But for one thing Louise was always grateful. Her own troop of Girl Scouts sincerely liked her, for her own sake as well as Dorothy's. Only Dorothy she believed really understood and cared for her deeply in spite of her faults and idiosyncrasies.

With Dorothy alone she felt able to say and behave exactly as she desired. She could drop into one of her moods of self-absorption, or speak as if she were thinking aloud. Not always were her ideas clear even to herself until she had slowly evolved them.

Now these days in the woods Louise felt freer, less awkward and self-conscious. Mysteriously, unexpectedly, she was finding herself.

With the other girls nature study was a

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pastime, or merely a necessity of their outdoor Scout training. With Louise it was becoming a passionate delight.

The note of the first bird singing deep among the beechwoods found her awake and guessing the name before slipping noiselessly outdoors to see if the warbler could be discovered.

The other girls were amused by the fact that Louise wandered about all day carrying a nature book in her hand. She studied the trees and flowers, even the stones, silent most of the time while her companions chattered. If one of them asked a question concerning the outdoors that she could answer, she would become eloquent enough. But to Dorothy McClain alone she confided her deeper spiritual and mental reactions.

"It is as if I had been asleep all my life before, Dorothy, dear, and was only beginning to wake up. Somehow I cannot explain it, even to myself, I feel so convinced that this summer in the woods will have a tremendous influence on my future life. I am going to find something in these woods that I have been looking for in a stupid fashion since I was a little girl."

"We are what the winds and sun and waters

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made us," Dorothy quoted, glad to recall at this moment the lines her father so often repeated.

Louise shook her head.

"No, I mean something different. We all are what you have just said. I feel lately that the outdoors is going to do something special for me. Actually I mean I am going to find something here the rest of you may not find."

Louise laughed. She had a large mouth with strong, white teeth. "That speech of mine would annoy my mother dreadfully. She says I am always dreaming and never interested in *real* things. Nothing ever seemed real to me until this summer in Beechwood Forest."

Carefully she smoothed the brown army blanket on her cot bed.

She and Dorothy McClain were straightening their tent preparatory for inspection in the hour after breakfast. Their flag raising and Scout drill were the first features of the long summer day.

The tent was scrupulously neat.

Dorothy McClain stooped to pick up a fallen book. She was paying a slightly puzzled attention to the other girl's odd conversation.

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"Would it not be difficult to persuade your mother to believe, Louise, that you and I are interested in our camp housekeeping? Miss Mason said the other day you probably would earn a merit badge before the summer was past for cooking over a camp fire. Is this because you are preparing to spend your entire life out of doors?"

Dorothy appeared amused and incredulous. She was devoted to athletics and a thoroughly normal and delightful person. Nevertheless, the two people for whom she cared most, excepting her father, were her brother Lance and her friend Louise Miller, both of whom were unusual.

"You are an angel, Dorothy, to try to be sympathetic with me. You can't know what I am talking about, if I don't myself. There is only one other person in the world to whom I could speak, Miss Frean. When I know better what I am only dreaming of at present I shall confide to her and ask her advice. Isn't it fine to think of her nearby in her little House in the Woods, always ready to give us help and advice. Tory declares she would never have dared to insist we have Kara at camp with us when she is so ill and unhappy except for Miss Frean's nearness."

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Her task accomplished, Louise turned aside from her cot bed and put her arm about the other girl's shoulders.

"Dorothy, I know I am selfish with you. I suppose because I am so tongue-tied with other people I pour forth everything upon you. I have not forgotten you said you wanted to speak to me about something this morning when we were alone. What is it?"

Dorothy stooped and glanced in the small square mirror which hung suspended from one of the tent poles.

Her bright chestnut hair was braided and twisted about her head. Ordinarily her father objected to this grown up fashion. At camp Dorothy insisted that two long plaits were always in one's way. Her eyes were a clear blue with a slight hint of gray, her skin healthy and freshly colored. A fine, frank line formed her lips. Altogether she was the type of American girlhood who represents many of our highest ideals.

At the present moment a frown appeared between her brows.

"I did want to ask your opinion about something, Louise. Yet nothing is more important to me than to see how happy you are this summer and how the life in the forest is

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changing you. What I wanted to ask is your view concerning the apology the Boy Scouts have made us for their rudeness. Shall we or shall we not bury the hatchet and agree to forgive them? The situation is particularly uncomfortable for me. I don't like to take any special position in the matter, because Lance and Don are my brothers. Lance has confessed he was principally responsible for their effort to frighten or tease us soon after our arrival at camp. So far as I have been able to find out we seem about evenly divided on the subject. Tory Drew wishes to forget all about it. She is so grateful to Don and Lance for rescuing Kara that she refuses to consider anything else. Edith Linder agrees with Tory besides Evan Phillips and several other girls.

"Strangely the persons most opposed to forgiving the boys and making friends again are Margaret Hale and Joan Peters.

"We are to vote on the question to-night.

"But here comes Teresa. Perhaps she will tell us how she feels on the subject. I wonder what is the matter? She looks worried, and she has been so happy at camp."

At the tent opening Teresa appeared.

"Do come on down to the lake and let us

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sit there a half hour and talk if you have finished your work?" she asked.

Teresa's olive coloring had deepened in the weeks in the sunshine and fresh air, her cheeks were more rose colored, her wide eyes with their half mature, half childish expression were slightly plaintive at this instant.

The shores of the lake, not a great distance from the camping ground, were a favorite resting place for the Girl Scout Troop.

Not only did they rest here and hold long conversations, of necessity here a good deal of the camp work took place. Clothes and dishes were washed, water was had for cleaning. Farther up on the left-hand side, where a shore of bright pebbles ran down into the lake, was the bathing beach for the campers. The water for drinking was obtained at a pure spring up the hill of the Three Pines which rose not far off from the camp.

At present, as the greater number of the girls were still busy in their tents, the vicinity of the lake was agreeably solitary.

As the three girls sat down Louise Miller said suddenly:

"There is a legend of a lake where every night at midnight a maiden arises bearing in her hands a silver bowl. One may make a wish and cast it into the silver bowl. Then

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the maiden disappears. On another night, one can never know exactly when, the maiden returns and on this night grants your wish."

"I wish she would appear at once," Teresa grumbled. "I have a wish she might be persuaded to grant. I want something more exciting to happen at camp. Oh, I am enjoying it of course, but of late the days have been a good deal alike."

"What is it you want, Teresa?" Louise Miller demanded a little scornfully. Two girls could not have been more unlike. Because Louise was intellectual she could not altogether refrain from regarding the other girl with a mixture of pity and amused contempt, as well as occasional envy.

Teresa was so pretty, so gentle and confiding and pleasure loving. When she failed to live up to the Scout rules, as all of the girls, being human, did now and then, no one ever blamed Teresa. Nor did Louise Miller understand that Teresa represented the type of girl who oftentimes has a stronger will than any other, hidden beneath her apparent gentleness. Teresa was not conscious of possessing a strong will. In fact, she would have denied the fact, believing she was telling the exact truth.

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She only knew that in a quiet fashion she wanted what she wanted very intensely and that it was almost impossible to give up any wish. She might try her best, she might even pretend to herself that she had given up. The desire was inclined to be only asleep and to wake again. One must remember this characteristic in hearing of Teresa Peterson's after career.

Teresa shrugged her shoulders.

"I am not anxious to talk to you, Louise, only it is so impossible to see Dorothy without you."

Teresa flushed prettily.

"There, I don't mean to be rude. One is now and then without intending it. I suppose you are such a profoundly intellectual individual you cannot bear with my frivolous character.

"I only want to say to Dorothy that I am specially anxious to have our camp of Girl Scouts make friends with the Boy Scouts. I have a special reason and promised to do my best with the girls. But of course I know I have not a great deal of influence, like you have Dorothy, or Margaret Hale, or Tory Drew."

Teresa's voice and manner became vaguely plaintive.

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"Then we could have occasional dances, or supper parties, something to vary the outdoor monotony. Oh, of course I love the camp better than being at home. I only thought we were going to have some other associates beside just our own Troop. Most of the boys are our old friends and Don and Lance are your brothers, Dorothy. I don't see any point in our always avoiding each other."

"I see, Teresa, feminine society is not enough for you. I wonder if it ever will be," Louise remarked with such profound disgust and annoyance that Dorothy shook her head reproachfully.

"Don't be so cross, Ouida, I am sure Teresa does not mean any great harm. I like boys, I am obliged to like them with six brothers of my own. Besides, I feel as Teresa does that it is stupid and self righteous of us to continue to refuse to have anything to do with the Boy Scouts simply because they once offended us. Certainly I miss the opportunity to see Lance and Don now and then."

Anxious to be out of the conversation, Louise Miller picked up a book of nature studies on the New England country, by John Burroughs, and began reading.

Teresa Peterson's nature was not a straight-

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forward one. Without actual proof Louise Miller felt this instinctively. Of course there was no great harm in her. But then all the more reason why she might make mischief without intending it.

A few moments later the three girls moved back toward camp. Tent inspection was over and they were going for an all-day hike through the woods.

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CHAPTER VIII

LIGHT AND SHADE

VICTORIA DREW sat on the lowest step leading into the evergreen cabin. This was the name she preferred to call it. Inside Kara lay asleep.

There was no one else at the camp in Beechwood Forest at this moment.

The other girls and the Troop Captain had departed for a day's hike, not to return until late afternoon.

Nevertheless Tory and Kara had not been alone. This never occurred; Edith Linder had remained to be useful and to relieve Tory. As a matter of fact, the Troop Captain, Miss Mason, and half a dozen girls had insisted that Tory go forth for the long hike. The day was a perfect midsummer day and each and every one of them would gladly remain with Kara.

Tory had declined. In face of the argument that it was her duty to give the other Girl Scouts the opportunity to be useful to Kara, who was their friend as well as her own, Tory

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insisted that today she was too tired for a long tramp. In any case she would stay on at camp. Some other day she would be glad to change places.

At present Edith Linder had gone the half mile or more away to the little House in the Woods on an errand. She had promised to help prepare supper before the camping party could return. Finding herself in need of supplies she had explained to Tory and slipped away. Kara would not be apt to awaken soon and there appeared no immediate need for her.

In truth Tory was glad to be alone for an hour.

In a short time the sun would set.

Weary Tory believed she wanted an hour for quiet thinking.

Earlier in the day Teresa had confessed that she was feeling a degree of disappointment in the summer camp.

Tory Drew was disappointed, but for different reasons.

The past winter had been the most difficult she could remember. After a wandering existence abroad with her artist father, it had not been simple to find her place and to make friends in Westhaven. Yet she had accomplished both. Her aunt, Miss Victoria Fenton,

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did not regard her with great affection, nevertheless at least she had agreed that the younger Victoria had become slightly less trying. And she and her uncle, Mr. Richard Fenton, at first not liking each other, had become devoted comrades.

Save for his interest and aid the summer camp, now surrounding her like a quiet guard, would never have been a possibility.

Growing a little restless, Tory changed her position.

Would it not have been better had she gone on the errand to Miss Frean and asked Edith to watch beside Kara. Of late Kara frequently showed that she was weary of so much of her society.

Moreover, without confessing the fact, Tory appreciated that she was suffering from the strain. She was tired and nervous oftener than she was accustomed to feeling.

A quiet talk with Memory Frean and a walk to the House in the Woods would have done her good.

Her uncle had said that he hoped this summer would give them an opportunity for a closer intimacy. He believed that her influence would be of benefit to Tory. If their friendship of long ago had ended, he had not

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for that reason ceased to admire Miss Frean.

At this moment a breeze swept through Beechwood Forest, setting the leaves shimmering with a fairylike enchantment.

An instant Tory was aroused from her reflections.

She was alone with no one to disturb her. Why not slip into her tent and find her sketch book? She probably would have time for a sketch before Kara awakened or Edith Linder returned.

Unaware of her own action, Tory shook her head.

She was too tired to sketch, and worse, felt no inspiration or desire. Next to her grief over Kara was her disappointment in regard to her summer's work.

Miss Mason had agreed that she might try for a Merit Badge as an artist during their camp. Surely she had sufficient talent to have won it. She had looked forward to having an arm filled with worth-while sketches of her outdoor summer to show her father upon his return to Westhaven.

Now she must face the fact that she would have not a single drawing she would care to submit to competent judges, not even a sketch she would be willing to have her father criticize.

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Of course she would be glad to have sacrificed her summer to Kara, if Kara had revealed a moderate amount of appreciation.

In truth Kara was not even as fond of her as she had been in the past before she had been able to show her devotion. To do one's best and always seem inadequate is not a condition many persons can face cheerfully.

Inside, in the room beyond the open door, the other girl stirred, and Tory glanced in.

On a cot by a window Kara lay asleep.

The room had changed since her coming. Formerly it had been the Girl Scout living room. Here they had eaten their meals and held their Scout meetings on the occasional rainy evenings when their more splendid outdoor meeting place had been less comfortable.

This could still be managed if Kara were well enough or in the mood to take part. But always her comfort and her wish were first.

Thrown over her at this moment was a gay woolen cover made by her own Troop of Girl Scouts. During the past winter each of them, who had not known how previously, had learned to knit as a part of their home training. The suggestion had come from Teresa that each girl knit a square of her favorite color, and thus a rainbow scarf might shed good fortune upon Kara.

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So far, Tory decided, with a sudden trembling of her lips, the promise had not been fulfilled.

Kara was no happier in body or mind since her return to the camp.

Yet the room in which she was lying at present asleep was altogether charming.

The sunlight, fading into its last brilliancy, shone through pale yellow curtains. On the mantel above the fireplace was a brown bowl of yellow wild flowers. Perched above, with wings outspread, was Mr. Richard Fenton's last gift to the evergreen cabin, the stuffed figure of an American eagle. A splendid specimen, one instinctively looked up toward it on entering the room. Over it were the words, "The Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing in Beechwood Forest."

A table drawn up near the couch was filled with flowers, books, magazines and small articles. Scarcely a day passed that Kara did not receive a gift of some kind, not only from the Girl Scouts and their families, but from her many friends in Westhaven.

Yet, apparently, Kara no longer cared for what in the past would have given her happiness. At one time she had been glad to feel that Westhaven did not regard her merely as

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a little waif who had been left upon their bounty and brought up at the "Gray House." She was the ward of the entire village. Now this was of no further concern to her.

Tiptoeing softly into the room, Tory closed a window without arousing the sleeper.

Strange to think that Kara long ago had slept in this same room and been rescued by a stranger! What would be her emotions if she knew that in this house, tumbled down and uncared for, she had been deserted as a baby?

Tory decided that she must remember to warn Mr. Jeremy Hammond, who had rescued Kara, never to recall the fact to her mind. Dr. McClain had agreed that for the present this would be wisest, as in no possible way must Kara be excited or depressed.

True, Mr. Hammond had never been to see Kara since her accident! He must have learned of her misfortune. A large box of roses had arrived at the "Gray House." Yet neither Mr. or Mrs. Hammond nor Lucy had come personally to inquire.

At the thought Tory's face flushed with annoyance. Mr. Hammond had not been attracted by Kara when he appeared at the orphan asylum with the idea of adopting the

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little girl he had discovered long ago. Instead he had chosen Lucy, the little girl whom Kara had cared for as if she were a small sister. Lucy, at least, should have paid daily visits to see if she could be useful. Possibly she had forgotten Kara amid her new wealth.

"Well, *she* would never forget or be unfaithful," Tory thought with a sudden intensity of feeling characteristic of her. Some day Kara must surely find someone or something to compensate her for her difficult girlhood!

If only there might be a treasure, some fortunate inheritance, hidden away in the little evergreen house, left there by the parents who seemed to have cared less than nothing for their baby!

At her own dreaming Tory smiled. She then tiptoed out of the room again. The place had been thoroughly searched for information and not a line had been discovered save the slip of paper with Kara's name, "Katherine Moore."

Outside on the veranda Tory did not sit down at once.

She could see some one approaching toward the camp down the long path. Edith Linder was probably returning. It was, perhaps, as well. Miss Mason, the Troop Captain, insisted

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that the girls never be at camp or in the woods alone.

If Miss Frean knew she would doubtless come back with Edith. Tory hoped this might be true. There were so many questions to discuss. Kara had proposed an interesting suggestion earlier in the day. Evan Phillips' mother might be induced to teach their own little group of Girl Scouts outdoor dancing. Where could there be a more perfect opportunity than here in the heart of Beechwood Forest in their own "Choros," or dancing-ground?

The figure approaching was not a girl's.

At some distance off Tory recognized Lance McClain. He was strolling calmly along in the most unconcerned fashion, a book open in his hand. Now and then he glanced down and read a few lines.

Not the slightest intimation did his manner reveal that he ought to regard himself as an unwelcome visitor in the Girl Scout camp.

Tory had not seen him since the morning when he had aided in bringing Kara home. On that occasion he had been told that the girls were still undecided whether they wished to have anything further to do with Lance's group of Boy Scouts during their summer camping season.

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"Hello, Tory; I hoped I would find you outdoors," he called out amiably when within a few yards of the evergreen house.

Tory ran down the steps.

"Don't make a racket, Lance! What in the world are you doing here? Kara is asleep and I am on guard. You know you are not supposed to come to our camp. I feel as people used to in the old fairy stories and legends. Somehow I must try to save you from having your head chopped off, or some other fearful end. I do consider you deserve it, but somehow it would be unpleasant."

"Your gentleness and kindness of heart overpower me, Oh, Victoria of Beechwood Forest," Lance answered. He bowed in the graceful fashion that for some unexplainable reason often aggravated Tory, and Dorothy and Donald McClain; Lance's own sister and brother.

Lance was too unlike other boys at times not to be trying.

"Come down to the shore of the lake with me, won't you Princess Nausicaa?" he demanded. "See how well I remember the name some one bestowed upon you when I was here before. I have another reason for recalling it. I shall explain in another instant if you will be so good as to listen.

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"What a pleasure to find you alone! Of course I expected it. I can't say I should have cared to enter this particular camp if I had been forced to face the entire troop of disapproving maiden Scouts. Still, there is something I am anxious to have brought to your attention. Come along, Tory."

The girl shook her head.

"Not so far away as the lake, Lance. I'll come to the big beech here near the cabin. I'll know then if Kara wakes and wants me, yet we will not be near enough to disturb her."

Under the deep green shelter Tory looked more searchingly at her companion.

"You say you expected to find me at camp with most of the other girls away. Did you see them on their hike or did Dorothy tell you we were planning an all-day tramp?"

Lance shook his head.

"No, I have seen no one and heard nothing from Dorothy. If I have a secret source of information isn't that my affair? In any case you would not have me betray another?"

Tory sighed.

"Oh, for goodness sake, Lance, do say what you intend to say in a straightforward fashion. I wish you were more like Don. One can always understand and depend upon Don.

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Then, when she saw Lance flush, Tory regretted her speech.

"I am all too accustomed to that remark, Tory. I assure you that if I have seen any one from your camp or received any information concerning you, it is not because I desired to be disagreeable. I was hoping I might be allowed to extend you the olive branch.

"In fact, I have the olive branch with me. It is hidden away in my book."

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CHAPTER IX

THE ODYSSEY

TORY took the book into her own hands. Sitting down on the ground, she opened the leaves carefully.

Nothing to suggest an olive branch met her gaze, not a pressed leaf or a flower which might have served as a symbol.

Seated beside her, Lance's thin face, with its tanned skin and humorous brown eyes, peered eagerly over her shoulder.

Tory shook her head.

"Explain yourself again, Lance. What has this book, the story of the wanderings of the Greek hero, Odysseus, after the Trojan war, to do with ending the feud between your troop of Boy Scouts and our own of girls?" Tory patiently inquired. "I know you have *some* idea in mind, but it takes a cleverer person than I to fathom it."

Gently Lance removed his book from the girl's clasp.

"Listen, Tory, for a few moments while I read to you. Then I'll tell you what I mean

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and ask for your help if you are willing to give it. You look tired and it may rest you."

Gladly Tory submitted. Clasping her hands together in her lap, she let her eyes wander from their first glance at the little log cabin with its bright covering of evergreens on and away into the deeper green of Beechwood Forest, now shadowy with the approach of evening.

Lance could be agreeable when he liked. The winter before, when first she had been introduced to Dorothy McClain's six brothers, she had liked Lance better than the others. She even had preferred him to Don, his twin brother, whom people in Westhaven insisted was the handsomest member of the family.

During an illness of Lance's she had been able to save him from being seriously burned. Afterwards, curiously, they became less friendly. In any case Tory knew that she at present preferred Don. Not only was he handsomer and stronger and more straightforward, he showed a sincerer liking for her.

"So there the stout-hearted Odysseus lay and slept, worn out with all his toil. But meanwhile Athena went to the Sea-Kings' city, up to the palace of their ruler, the wise Alcinous and into the beautiful chamber

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where his daughter lay asleep, the young princess, Nausicaa, fair as the Immortals. On either side of the threshold two maidens were sleeping, as lovely as the Graces, and the glittering doors were shut. But the Goddess floated through them like a breath of wind up to the head of the couch, and spoke to Nausicaa in a dream. She seemed to her one of her dear companions, the daughter of Dymas, the sailor."

As Lance continued reading Tory did not listen attentively. He had a pleasant, quiet voice that shed a restful influence upon her as he had hoped.

Tory was not especially fond of reading, not to the extent that her uncle, Mr. Richard Fenton would have liked. He spent the greater part of his time in his library at the old Fenton house in Westhaven.

Miss Frean in her own little House in the Woods gently reproached Tory now and then for her lack of interest in books. Perhaps neither one of them could understand that pictures were what she cared for intensely. The pictures need not of necessity be of the character that hang upon walls. Tory was seeing pictures at this moment which were affording her the deepest pleasure.

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If only she had her neglected sketch book in her hands!

Bent over his book Lance's head would have made an interesting sketch even if she were unable to obtain a satisfactory likeness.

Then Tory forgot Lance and the outward objects surrounding her. The words he was reading aloud were creating a beautiful image in her mind. She seemed able to see "The Princess Nausicaa, fair as the Immortals."

Her companion read on:

"So the night passed away, and the young dawn appeared on her glorious throne and awakened the princess."

With a bang Lance closed his book.

"Stop dreaming, Tory Drew. You scarcely know I am present and I want you to be particularly sensible and attentive to what I am going to say. I suppose you know I have been reading the story of the Odyssey, since you told me Miss Frean had read it to you early in the summer."

Tory laughed. For all his quietness and apparent gentleness Lance's nature was more domineering than most persons appreciated. Their friends believed that Don ruled in the intimate friendship between the two brothers. More often than not they were mistaken.

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"We have been having a great time at our Scout camp, Tory. Hope you girls have had as good! I have enjoyed the summer a lot better than I expected. I know I have improved in the drilling and a few other things. Lucky for me that I am fond of a few outdoor sports; keeps up my end in the Scout proficiency tests!"

"All right, Lance, but why don't you come to the point? I know it is hard for you to have to give your time and energy to so many things and never be allowed to study the music you love. But then, of course, your father knows best. I can understand his not wishing you to be a musician," Tory added hastily, fearing she might appear to be criticising the doctor whom she loved and admired. "I can appreciate your father saying that with six sons and a daughter and he only a small town physician, he never could afford to let you have the musical education you would require."

"All right, Tory, no use going into that subject now. I have heard all that a good many times. What we were talking about was the Scout organizations, yours and mine. I think they are specially good for us; for you, because you are an only girl and kind of

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spoiled by pretty nearly everybody. Good for me because I am a selfish fellow who likes to be alone unless I can hang around with Don. We get the combination of freedom and discipline we both need.

"At first this summer I thought the other fellows were not going to have much use for my queer notions. I thought they stood for me because Don is very nearly the most popular Scout in camp. I was kind of pleased when they chose me to come over to camp and extend the olive branch to you Girl Scouts."

The thin, brown face was now eager and glowing, but Tory remained as completely mystified.

"Remember the tableaux your troop of Girl Scouts gave in Westhaven this spring? They were a great success and I, for one, shall never forget how you looked as Joan of Arc.

"Ever since our Boy Scout Troop has been trying to get up something as good. This summer we decided would be our best chance with all the fellows together and our officers and several members of our Scout Council staying at camp."

"Yes," Tory replied, beginning to be anxious to go back to Kara and wishing Lance would finish what he was endeavoring to say.

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The other Girl Scouts might come back to camp at any moment. She did not wish to be discovered seated under a beech tree conversing with Lance McClain, whose presence at their camp was neither invited nor desired. Later she would be able to explain, but for the moment she would not enjoy the position.

Lance smiled.

"I appreciate you are in a hurry, Tory, as well as the other things you are thinking. You need not believe I wish to be discovered here until you have had a chance to make things clear to Miss Mason and the Girl Scouts. But I want to put my proposition to you before you have your outdoor meeting to-night to decide whether you wish to make friends once more."

Again Tory was puzzled to understand how Lance could know so much of their daily program. His next suggestion drove all other thoughts from her mind.

"To get to the point: After a lot of reading and discussion we have concluded to close our summer holiday with an outdoor pageant. I suppose one should call it a pageant. We are not going to do exactly what other people have been doing all summer. We don't intend to present New England

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history. After the big pageant at Plymouth Rock, it would take a good deal of nerve to try to imitate it. Se we have decided to present the 'Wanderings of Odysseus.' We are not sure as to details. Our plan is to have a series of Greek tableaux that will tell the story and have some one person read certain of the lines aloud."

Tory leaned forward.

She appeared interested but doubtful.

"That is a pretty big idea, Lance. Do you feel you will be equal to it? Presenting an American pageant is one thing, but gracious! who knows what Greek pictures should be like?

"Of course, I am sure the girls will be delighted if there is anything we can do to be useful. You were awfully kind about helping us," Tory continued, feeling she had not appeared as enthusiastic as Lance might have hoped. "But where is the olive branch I am to offer the girls to-night when we have our meeting to decide whether we are willing to make friends?"

Lance flushed and looked uncomfortable.

"The olive branch is what I have been talking about, Tory. The Boy Scouts want you girls to take part in our Greek pageant.

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We want you to take the feminine rôles. Now, don't say no, right off, Tory, and don't be so discouraging as you seem to feel. I confess I am counting on your influence in more ways than one. The truth is the suggestion came from me, and I have had a hard enough time trying to make the other fellows see the thing as I do. Suppose we don't accomplish anything remarkable, it is fun to have had a try. And it is worth while trying to make people see things and think things that have had to do with other nations at other times in the world's history. I want you to talk to your uncle, Mr. Fenton, and to ask his advice before we go much further. I suppose you know he is a Greek scholar."

During Lance's speech Tory's expression had become more sympathetic and convinced.

"Perhaps the idea is possible, Lance. In any case, I am delighted to help all I can by talking to Uncle Richard and using whatever influence I have with the girls. Only one thing, you must not count on my taking part. I could not give up the time from being with Kara."

"I understand, Tory; we'll see how it works out. I was thinking of Kara as I came over here to talk to you. A lot better than a good

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many other people I believe I can understand Kara's present state of mind. You see, I have been sick myself. Kara will brace up once she gets hold of herself. Don't you take anything she says or does too seriously."

Lance and Tory got up and began walking back toward the evergreen cabin.

"You know if this thing goes through I believe it may be a help to Kara. She isn't strong enough for a lot of excitement, but it will give her an outside interest. Right now she needs to think of something beside herself.

"I suppose I ought to have strength of character enough not to mention it. But there are days when the fact that I am never going to have a chance to be a great musician gets hold of me, and I know there is nobody on earth then who is as disagreeable as I can be. I don't see why Kara cannot play some part in the tableaux. She could be seated in her chair as if it were a kind of throne," Lance concluded.

The girl looked at him gravely.

"You can be a comfort when you wish to be, Lance, and you are right, you can be dreadfully disagreeable. Only you are not very often.

"Would your telling me how you know

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what we are doing at our Girl Scout camp involve some one else?"

Lance nodded.

"Yes, so I decline to mention names. Now, don't be stupid and think I mean anything serious. If two people meet they have a right to speak to each other. Good-by, I must be off. I think I hear the Girl Scouts returning. Do the best you can for us."

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CHAPTER X

CONSULTATIONS AND DECISIONS

AT the close of their evening's discussion the Girl Scouts had not finally decided whether to accept or reject the invitation tendered them by Tory Drew.

They would be friends again. This opinion was at last unanimous. But to take part in a Greek pageant which would require a sacrifice of time and energy from the routine of their camp life? This represented a deeper problem.

There must be a longer period for consultation. The advice of their Girl Scout Council must be asked. Upon this, Miss Mason, the Troop Captain, insisted, before even expressing her own point of view.

By the following afternoon she and Tory and Edith Linder started out for the little House in the Woods to talk over the idea with Memory Frean, who represented one of their chief sources of wisdom.

The summer afternoon was a perfect one. Illimitably beautiful pale dappled gray clouds filled the summer sky, shutting out the fierce rays of the sun.

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As they hoped, from a little distance off the three newcomers discovered Miss Frean busy in her garden.

Tory saw her first. She made a motion with her hand to suggest that they approach softly without being observed.

The older woman wore no hat, and a simple outdoor cotton dress of pale gray, with a deep blue scarf over her shoulders.

Her hair was more carefully arranged than usual in the shining, heavy brown braids Tory so often had admired.

In truth Memory Frean had begun to take more interest in her personal appearance since her meeting with Victoria Drew on the wintry road. So long she had lived alone in her little House in the Woods, with her outdoor interests in the summer time and her books in winter, that she had grown too careless.

The meeting with Tory had brought back old friends and memories. Tory had introduced her to the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing. Now, as a member of their Council, Memory felt as if the girls were her adopted daughters.

Edith Linder had been in a measure her adopted daughter. She had lived for the past winter in the house with Miss Frean.

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Now Edith uttered an exclamation of pleasure, which at Tory's gesture she quickly subdued.

Memory Frean was standing in the center of a plot of grass with her arms outstretched. Fluttering about her head were a family of wrens. Two had alighted within the palms of her hands and were gazing toward her with serious intentness.

In a nearby tree stood a new bird house, which she must recently have placed in position, as not far off was another bird house smaller and shabbier. Outside the door of the new home a feast of bread crumbs had been spread.

By and by one of the wrens flying near the new abode, pecked at a crumb. Something gave him confidence and courage. Inside the open door he disappeared. Instantly the entire family followed.

The three visitors burst into a cry of admiration. Memory Frean came toward them, still with her arms outstretched.

"I have been expecting you all day. No Girl Scout has been near me since Edith came on a borrowing expedition late yesterday afternoon. If you had waited any longer I should have been offended. See, I have put

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on a clean dress, and the water is boiling for tea, and the table spread in the Shakespeare garden."

Miss Frean led the way, with Edith and Tory clinging to her and Sheila Mason following.

The herbs in the Shakespeare garden were in the perfection of bloom. In the fragrance of the summer air mingled the pungent odors of thyme and marjoram, sage and rosemary.

A bunch of the herbs decorated the small round table.

Edith Linder disappeared toward the kitchen for the tea, while the three others sat down.

"Edith Linder has been a success as a Girl Scout this summer, has she not, Sheila? We did our best to prepare for the honor last winter. Edith and I realized that Tory opposed her joining your troop."

Tory flushed.

"Is it very kind of you, Memory Frean, to refer to one's past mistakes, especially when I am your guest?"

Memory Frean laid her large but beautiful hand, a little roughened from outdoor work, upon Tory Drew's sensitive, slender one.

"I suppose I should apologize to you, Tory.

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I only meant to say that I am glad you finally agreed to allow Edith to enter your Patrol. I do not believe any of you quite realize what the honor meant to her. In a brief time she seems to have changed more than any one I have ever known. She had not had much of a chance in the past. Occasionally last winter, when she was with me, she gave Tory the right to her prejudice."

The large hand had not been raised from the smaller one.

Still weary, from what cause she could not guess, Tory felt as if the strength and vitality of the older woman were flowing gently into her.

Scarcely listening more than was necessary for politeness, she leaned her head against her companion's shoulder.

"I believe one of the most difficult things in the world to realize is that when people fail to possess the characteristics we have agreed they ought to possess, the failure nearly always comes from lack of opportunity, not from choice. I don't mean to be preaching truisms, I was only thinking of this in connection with the Scout organizations. They bring opportunities to so many who would have had no chance otherwise. Edith Linder

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had never had the opportunity or the spur she needed. Her ambition to be a good Scout has given her both.

"Wake up, Tory. Are you being nice to Edith as you promised me to be? She likes and admires you, and I am sure would not mind my speaking of this."

"There are three girls in our summer camp who have the greatest personal influence over the others. It is interesting to watch," Miss Mason remarked, smiling at the older woman. "Of course, under the circumstances I do not include Kara. Her illness makes her influence of a different kind at present."

Tory lifted her head, more interested in the discussion.

"Yes, I have noticed this about Margaret Hale and Dorothy McClain. I am not so sure, I think the third girl is Joan Peters," she ejaculated and relapsed into quiet again.

The two women glanced at Tory and then at Edith Linder, who was at this instant coming across the yard with the tea.

The two girls were an apt illustration of Memory Frean's last expressed opinion.

Edith had grown tall in the past year. Her features were large and a little coarse, but handsome in their own fashion. There was

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about her a look of capacity. If she had desired she could easily have lifted and carried the other girl who was nearly her own age. Edith's family had been small farmers for generations. Tory Drew's had been students and artists and writers. She had no appearance of physical strength and yet her vitality was probably as great.

She looked admiringly at the other girl.

"Edith is splendid. She knows more of cooking and practical things than any girl in camp. She was trying to teach me to cook and we were together a good deal of the time before Kara's accident. Now I see little of any of the other girls, although I really think Kara often would prefer anyone's society to mine."

Edith was by this time engaged in pouring the tea.

"I like to behave as if I were more at home in the House in the Woods than any one of the other Scouts," she explained. "After all, I am the only one who has lived here, although Tory is an older friend and my greatest rival."

Edith spoke as if she meant seriously what she was saying. Yet she spoke with entire good nature.

It had been agreed not to discuss the subject of the pageant until her return.

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The next half hour the two women and two girls talked of nothing else.

"I believe you should speak to other members of the Council beside me," Miss Frean argued. "Mr. Fenton is fairy god-father to the camp in Beechwood Forest. He is Tory's uncle and I think should be consulted. If I remember correctly he used to be a Greek scholar. He is not apt to have forgotten, and if he thinks well of the idea can be of great assistance."

Before dusk Sheila Mason and Edith Linder started back for camp. They left Tory to have supper with Miss Frean, who promised to bring her home later.

The suggestion had originated with the Troop Captain.

Tory protested that Kara would need her services and be hurt if she failed to appear.

'No, I want Miss Frean to talk to you for a special reason, Tory. I am sure you will find that the other girls, with my help, are capable of caring for Kara this *one* evening without you."

The little edge to Miss Mason's speech Tory had never heard her use before. It left her flushed and silent. She remained alone in the Shakespeare garden while Miss Frean walked a few yards into the woods with her guests.

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In what fashion was she failing as a Girl Scout, that her Troop Captain felt compelled to ask some one else to lecture her? Why had she not told her wherein lay her fault?

Tory found her eyes filling with tears. She was glad to be for a few moments alone. Not often was she given to this particular form of weakness. She disliked it in other persons, but of late her nerves had been troublesome. Were the other Girl Scouts finding her a difficult member of their camp group?

By and by the older woman returned. At first she and Tory said nothing upon any intimate topic. They continued to stroll about the garden until dusk.

Their supper was to be a simple meal of bread and milk and fruit that would give no trouble.

Since she had begun to study and love the New England country this garden of Memory Frean's had become of intense interest and affection to the young American girl who had spent so much of her life in foreign lands.

Within the yard and upon the border of the deep woods beyond she had learned the names of a wide variety of trees, birds and flowers. She knew the differences between the white and black and yellow pines, the

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spruce and the cedar and the several species of maple trees, the ashes and the birches. She had learned that the beech tree is singularly arrogant and permits few other trees to grow inside its woods.

At this season of the year the birds were less in evidence than earlier in the spring. Now, as darkness fell, Tory discovered that a greater number sang their evensong in Memory Frean's garden than near their own camp in Beechwood Forest. True, Miss Frean made everything ready for their reception.

Placed about the yard were half a dozen wide open bowls filled with fresh water.

The garden boasted a hedge of currant and raspberry bushes at present loaded with ripe fruit. There were no scarecrows about and no one ever made an effort to drive the birds away, so they were accustomed to plucking the unforbidden fruit of this garden.

This evening Tory assisted at the daily scattering of crumbs. This took place when possible at exactly the same hour.

Afterwards she and Memory Frean hid behind a shelter, where concealed they could watch the flight of the birds into the garden.

Some floated in from outside, others came down from their nests in Miss Frean's own trees to partake of her hospitality.

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This evening, appearing with the more regular visitors, was a golden-winged warbler, splendid with his conspicuous yellow wing bars. Close behind him came a pair of tanagers.

The female Tory did not recognize until Memory Frean explained that she was a dull green olive in color, unlike her brilliant, scarlet-coated husband.

In fact, Tory and Miss Frean did not go indoors until, from somewhere deep in the woods, a whippoorwill began his evening call.

In the meantime Tory had happily forgotten there was any subject to be discussed between herself and her friend that might not be an altogether happy one.

She did think of it, however, while she was eating her supper on a small table in Memory Frean's living-room, drawn up before a small fire.

The night was not particularly cool, yet the fire was not uncomfortable, and had been lighted at Tory's request.

The older woman had finished eating and sat holding an open magazine in her hands.

Tory's eyes studied the room, with which she now had grown familiar, with the same curiosity and pleasure. The room was so

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simple and odd. The hundreds of old books in their worn coverings, only a few new ones among them, lined the walls. By the window, the couch was covered with an old New England quilt, of great value, if Tory had realized the fact. The furniture was so inexpensive, the little pine table before her, the larger one with Memory Frean's lamp and books and a bowl of flowers, the chairs and long bench.

What a contrast to her own austere and handsome home in Westhaven, now the property of her uncle and aunt, Mr. Richard Fenton and Miss Victoria Fenton. If Memory Frean and her uncle had not ceased to care for each other perhaps there would have been no little House in the Woods.

Tory finished her supper and her reflections.

"Memory Frean, what is it Miss Mason wished you to talk about to me? How am I failing as a Girl Scout?"

When no one else was present she used the older woman's first name, loving its dignity and soft inflections.

Memory Frean put down her magazine.

"You are not failing, Tory, not in one sense. You are trying to accomplish too much. This is, of course, another form of failure. Take

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your dishes in to the kitchen and then sit here on the stool by me."

Five minutes after she continued:

"You see, Tory, it is with Kara you are making a mistake. You are doing yourself and Kara both injustice. Miss Mason tells me she has talked to you and that the other Girl Scouts have protested, yet you remain selfish about Kara."

The girl made no answer. If she did not like the accusation, she did not at present deny it.

"From the first you have been sentimental over your friendship with Katherine Moore. Kara first made a strong appeal to you when you were lonely and antagonistic toward your new life in a small New England town. This drew her closer to you than had you grown up together in ordinary girl fashion. Besides, you are romantic, Tory. You respond to the people who call forth that side of you. The mystery surrounding poor Kara has fascinated you. The fact that she knew nothing of her parents has made you feel that you could be more to her than had she enjoyed the family affection other girls receive. I believe in your heart of hearts you have planned some day to be Kara's fairy god-

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mother and make up to her for what she has failed to receive."

"Well, if I have, is it so wicked of me?" Tory demanded.

Memory Frean smiled.

"I am afraid so, Tory dear, although many wise persons may not agree with me. I don't think it often is allowed us to play special Providence to other people. Since Kara's accident more than ever have you been trying to accomplish this for her. You have been wearing yourself out and Kara feels this and cannot enjoy it. In their own ways the other Girl Scouts resent your belief that Kara must always prefer you to be with her and to care for her. She was their friend and they knew and loved her before she came into your life.

"Together you agreed to bring Kara to camp and to see if you could make things easier for her. The other girls want their chance too, Tory. Don't you realize, dear, that you are growing tired out from too much responsibility. You can't help Kara if you are tired and nervous and, though you may not confess it to yourself, a little resentful of your own disappointment in the summer.

"Remember you told me what a lot of outdoor sketching you intended to do. Your

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father had given you permission to work at your painting and drawing in the summer time, provided you gave your time and energy to your school in the winter. You have not shown me a new drawing since Kara's accident.

"Then, don't you suppose the other girls miss having you with them on some of their excursions? Martha Greaves, the English Girl Guide, must have felt many times that you have been neglecting her. She is a stranger and in a way has the right to depend upon you. Am I reproaching you for too much all at once, Tory?"

The girl arose up from her low stool and stood with her hands clasped and a frown on her forehead.

"You have said a good deal, Memory Frean. If you don't mind, suppose we start back to camp."

Tory made no other reply. After a little she and Memory Frean were walking along the path that led in the direction of Beechwood Forest.

Tory was no more fond of criticism than most persons, and less accustomed to it. Her mother had died when she was a small girl, and her father had been her devoted friend and admirer, rarely her judge. To her

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aunt Miss Victoria Fenton's efforts at discipline Tory had yielded little. Her uncle, Mr. Richard Fenton, made no attempt at discipline, but had been sympathetic toward her after the birth of a rare understanding between them.

To-night Tory was angry with the person whom, next to Kara, she had believed her dearest friend in Westhaven.

Mistakes she may have made in her devotion to Kara. But Memory Frean, Sheila Mason, her Troop Captain, and her own Girl Scouts might have appreciated the situation.

She had been with Kara when the accident took place that might result in the tragedy of her life. Dr. McClain and the two surgeons with whom he consulted could only say there was a possibility of a future recovery. But before anything could be hoped for Kara must reach a happier state of mind and body.

Never had there been any pretence that she and Kara were not more intimate and devoted than any other two girls in their Troop, save perhaps Dorothy McClain and Louise Miller.

Then what was one to do but give Kara all that one possessed?

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However, if Kara were wearying of this and really preferred the other girls, Tory appreciated that she was probably being a nuisance. She would not speak of it to Memory Frean or Miss Mason, but in the future Kara should not be so bored by her society.

Walking on together through the woods, once Memory Frean attempted to put her arm inside Tory's. Quietly Tory drew away.

The dusk was deepening. After a time footsteps behind them could be heard. It was as if some one were following them.

A screech owl called and startled her; Tory had a sudden attack of nerves; running ahead a few yards, she stumbled. The footsteps were coming nearer.

Memory Frean put an arm about her.

"Stand still, Tory. Let us wait here and see who is approaching."

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CHAPTER XI

OUT OF THE PAST

THE stranger was a middle-aged man with iron-gray hair. He was carrying his hat in his hand and enjoying the beauty and fragrance of the late evening in the woods.

As Tory rushed toward him, Miss Frean stepped back into a deeper shadow.

The newcomer was Tory's uncle, Mr. Richard Fenton.

"How stupid of me to have been frightened!" she exclaimed. "I have been taking supper with Miss Frean and she is walking back to camp with me. You were coming to camp to see us?"

Mr. Fenton agreed, walking forward to speak to Memory Frean. Except for an occasional meeting upon the streets of Westhaven, and one or two brief conversations with regard to the Girl Scout camp in Beechwood Forest, they had not seen each other in many years.

To-night in the depth of the woods, with

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Tory walking between them, they talked as if neither of them recalled any past intimacy.

"I have been a little worried about you, Tory," Mr. Fenton said finally. "You have not been in town to see me in a number of days. I thought it was agreed that we were to see each other once a week."

Tory nodded.

"Yes, I have missed you dreadfully, but I have been so busy. I thought if you became very lonely you would come and find me," she announced, with the familiarity of a delightful intimacy.

By and by when Miss Frean and Mr. Fenton continued talking, the barrier between them increasing, Tory scarcely listened, thinking their conversation not particularly entertaining.

They were merely discussing the weather and the scenery.

In another quarter of an hour the lights of the camp showed nearby. Darkness had not completely descended. Outdoors one could still see one's way.

The chief lights appeared inside the evergreen cabin, while in front of the door stood a large automobile.

Fearing that Kara had grown unexpectedly

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worse, Tory darted away from her companions and into the cabin.

The car she saw was not Dr. McClain's.

Entering the room, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, she found it filled with people.

Kara sat in the center in her wheeled chair. She looked pale but excited and interested.

Three visitors were standing near her. They were Mr. and Mrs. Jeremy Hammond and the little girl, Lucy Martin, whom they had adopted some months ago.

In the years at the old Gray House on the hill in Westhaven Lucy had been Kara's special charge.

If Tory had been fascinated by the little girl's extraordinary beauty in the past, she was more startled to-night. The room was lighted only by candles and a single large lamp under a yellow shade.

Lucy wore a pale yellow dress of some filmy, soft material and a large hat circled with a wreath of flowers.

She had removed her hat and held it as one would a large basket. Her dark hair made a stiff aureole about her delicately cut face with its pointed chin, large brilliantly black eyes and full red lips.

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Then Tory was both startled and repelled by the younger girl's expression.

She was staring at Kara with no suggestion of sympathy or affection; instead, she looked shocked and frightened and even disdainful.

Kara was extending her hands toward the little girl with more animation and pleasure than Tory had seen her reveal since her accident.

And actually, with a faint shudder, Lucy was drawing away.

An impulse to seize the little girl by the shoulders and forcibly thrust her out of the evergreen cabin assailed Tory.

She moved forward. In the meantime Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, becoming aware of Lucy's behavior, were endeavoring to conceal her rudeness.

"Kara, Lucy has been insisting each day that we bring her to see you. We did not know at first that you had gone from the Gray House. Afterwards Mr. Hammond was away for a short time and we were waiting for him," Mrs. Hammond remarked, speaking hurriedly but with extreme graciousness.

She was a pretty, exquisitely dressed woman of about thirty years with light brown hair and eyes. She appeared an agreeable society woman but without any especial force of

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character. Evidently if she cared a great deal for Lucy, the little girl in time would have small difficulty in having her own way.

This would not be equally true with Mr. Hammond.

At present he was divided by annoyance with his adopted daughter and a kind of puzzled curiosity.

He was staring about the gay room filled with girls and then at the figure in the wheeled chair.

Kara appeared to be interested in no one save Lucy.

Now as the child shrank away from her, her thin hands dropped in her lap, her face looked whiter and her gray eyes with the heavy dark lashes grew sadder and more wistful.

A little murmur, not actually voiced and yet capable of being heard, ran through the room.

This time Lucy must have understood the antagonism among the group of Girl Scouts that her manner had created.

At one time, and only a few months before, Kara had been everything to her, sister and nurse and friend. A few months of wealth and she seemed completely spoiled.

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"You have many friends, Kara, but if there is anything Mr. Hammond and I could possibly do for you, you have only to let us know," Mrs. Hammond suggested at this moment, not very tactfully.

"You are very kind, but there is nothing to be done," Kara returned coldly.

Apparently she had lost all interest in her guests, now that Lucy had so utterly forgotten the old days at the Gray House on the hill. She always had been an odd little creature, passionate, self willed and self seeking. Still, Kara had never doubted her affection.

Not yet eight o'clock and Kara not expected to retire until nine, nevertheless Tory looked about the room in search of Miss Mason. Kara was being wearied. Better the room full of people be asked to go outdoors. They could talk on in the deepening dusk.

At the open door Sheila Mason was talking to Miss Frean and Mr. Richard Fenton. At the moment she was not thinking of Kara and the three other visitors.

Trying to make up her mind to speak to Mr. and Mrs. Hammond herself, Tory saw that Mr. Hammond suddenly appeared restless and at the same time absorbed in thought.

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"See here, Miss Kara, I wonder if you would like me to tell you something? I am not perfectly sure and perhaps have not the right to speak. Yet after all I am pretty well convinced that I am not making a mistake and you cannot fail to be interested. You need things to interest you these days, don't you?"

Mr. Hammond spoke abruptly. Tory considered that his manner was kinder and he showed more interest in Kara than upon the day when he had come to the old Gray House to seek the little girl he had rescued years before. Then he had been fascinated by Lucy and Kara had been disregarded.

Kara looked up now with slightly more animation.

"Yes, I do need something to interest me these days, Mr. Hammond. I am afraid you will find me pretty difficult. Only a few weeks ago I cared so intensely for our summer camp in Beechwood Forest and every one of our Girl Scout occupations that nothing else appeared of the slightest importance. Now when everyone is so good to me I don't seem interested in anything. There are so many Scout subjects I could study when I have so much time and I don't care to take the trouble. I really am stronger perhaps than I pretend to be."

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Kara's tone was so unhappy and listless that Mr. Hammond's agreeable face clouded.

"Your state of mind is due to the fact that you have not recovered from the shock of your fall. You won't feel like that always, sure not to, a girl with the courage and good sense you have always revealed. Still, what I am going to tell you is obliged to stir you up. I don't believe you will object to the other Girl Scouts hearing what I tell you. You are such devoted friends.

"Ever since I entered this pretty room I have experienced an odd sensation connected with it. Somehow it seemed associated with you. This may not appear remarkable, the room is now your sanctuary and I am sure everything in it is for your service. But that is not what I have in mind.

"I was haunted by an almost forgotten impression. As I drove up to the cabin this afternoon, I felt that I had been in this vicinity before. Here something unusual had taken place which had left a strong impression upon me. I felt this more keenly when I entered this room, although I never beheld any other room so gay and pretty and filled with so many girls.

"The room was not always like this, Kara.

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You Girl Scouts must have seen the room a little as I beheld it a number of years ago, when you chose this spot for your summer camping grounds.

"Did I not once confide to you, Kara, that I discovered a tiny little girl in a deserted farmhouse when I was a young man, riding along a lane in this neighborhood? It looked more like an abandoned farm in those days to a man who knew extraordinarily little about farms. Perhaps the little house was never anything more than a cabin in the woods, with farmlands in the neighborhood. If so, they have vanished. Do you recall, Kara, the little girl I discovered and who she afterwards turned out to be?"

At last Tory Drew felt her senses returning, and at the same time an impulse to action. During Mr. Hammond's rambling story she had remained quiet, listening and yet all the time knowing its conclusion.

Previously Dr. McClain had impressed upon her the fact that Kara had been found in the little house in which she was living at present. If Mr. Hammond had once called the cabin a farmhouse, Dr. McClain had always been certain of its identity.

It was the doctor's opinion that Kara must

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not for the present be excited or disturbed by any reference to this fact.

At last Tory was aware that she should have spoken sooner, that any protest from her at present would come too late.

With all her listlessness vanished Kara was leaning forward, her eyes on the speaker, while the other Girl Scouts appeared almost equally interested.

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CHAPTER XII

RETROSPECTION

NOW that I look back, the room seems to have been extraordinarily clean under the circumstances, although it was bare and poor," Mr. Hammond continued. "There was just a bed and some chairs and a table. You were lying on the bed, Kara, and if you had objected to being left alone, you were perfectly agreeable and sweet tempered after I made your acquaintance. I remember you were extremely amiable during our ride together into Westhaven. You gave me an impression which I still carry with me that you would meet most situations with grace and good sense."

Mr. Hammond began wandering about the room. He appeared embarrassed by the intensity of Kara's attitude and the conviction that possibly he had not chosen a wise time or place for his revelation.

In fact, he had no intention of speaking of the matter at all. Surprise at finding himself a visitor to the girl in the same spot where he

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had discovered her as a baby had influenced his discretion.

"Is there anything else you could tell me, Mr. Hammond? You need not regret having spoken before the other girls. They are my friends and really know as much of my history as I know, there is so little information I have ever received."

"No, I am afraid not, Kara, I am sorry. Now and then I have considered that possibly we did not make a sufficiently thorough investigation. Yet I do not honestly believe this. At the time I searched the room thoroughly. I waited, thinking that in all probability some one would come back for you. Then, when I gave up this idea and took you with me to Westhaven, we did not fail in making another effort.

"Dr. McClain, I recall, insisted upon this and we came out here together. Moreover, we left a letter stating that if any one desired to find you, information could be had of Dr. McClain in Westhaven."

"There does not seem to be any doubt, no one ever did return and no one ever wished to find me. I have always thought, almost hoped that my mother and father were dead," Kara answered.

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No one else had spoken during the grave and dramatic conversation between Kara and Mr. Hammond. In fact, Kara herself had said little. Now her words affected the room filled with her friends with a sense of tragedy.

Tory Drew moved near the other girl, standing beside her in a defensive attitude, as if disaster must first meet her before it could again touch the friend so dear to her.

Mrs. Hammond took Lucy's hand in her own, attempting to draw the little girl toward the open door. Some day she hoped that Lucy might altogether forget the Gray House and think of herself as her own and Mr. Hammond's child.

At last Sheila Mason had ceased her talk with Mr. Fenton and Miss Frean. She turned toward the center of the room, looking as if she wished to ask Mr. and Mrs. Hammond to say farewell. Then the interest in Kara's face and in Mr. Hammond's words forbade the interruption.

Memory Frean had come into the room and Mr. Richard Fenton stood immediately behind her. He was watching Tory.

"I am afraid I have said too much or too little and perhaps tired or worried you, Kara. If you like, suppose we have a long, quiet talk

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some day alone. I'll come again to see you and we can go out into the woods together."

Conscious of the atmosphere and of his own imprudence, Mr. Hammond picked up his hat and stick which he had placed upon a table.

Again his own interest in the situation became stronger than other impressions.

Walking toward Kara's chair, he pushed the chair a few feet nearer the wall.

Without explaining his purpose he moved aside a rug which lay on the floor and struck the boards with his cane.

"Has this floor ever been taken up and a new one laid down?" he inquired, apparently of Victoria Drew, who chanced to be standing nearer than any one else.

Tory shook her head.

"I don't think so. The floor was in extremely good condition when we decided to make this cabin the center of our camp in Beechwood Forest."

"The bed stood just here," Mr. Hammond indicated with his walking stick the exact spot where Kara's chair had been the moment before. "I have always felt we should have had this floor removed. Kara, if you will give me permission, when the summer camp-

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ing days have passed, I should like to undertake it. There isn't one chance in a thousand we should come across anything, but it would be worth while to try, would it not?"

Kara's expression made no other answer necessary.

A few moments after the Hammonds had said farewell and were gone.

An instant it appeared as if Lucy wished to break away and speak to Kara. The other girl never glanced toward her, or seemed conscious of her presence after her first display of affection, so apparently Lucy lost the desire or the courage.

Immediately the Girl Scouts departed for their sleeping tents accompanied by their Troop Captain.

Miss Mason would return to say good-night to Kara and see that she was comfortable for the night. In the meantime there was the final evening ceremony with her Girl Scouts.

In the big room at present were only Tory, Miss Frean and Mr. Fenton, save for the girl in the wheeled chair.

Mr. Fenton approached Kara.

"I trust so many visitors and so much excitement will not be harmful to you," he said in the dignified fashion that always

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charmed Kara and his own niece. Mr. Fenton never addressed them as if they were merely young girls and of no special importance.

Always his manner was courtly and agreeable.

Toward Kara he extended a box of candy which he had been carrying under his arm.

"I know candy is to a large extent a forbidden fruit at camp. But as you are a kind of uncrowned queen these days, Kara, I thought you might be permitted to offer a sweet now and then to your ladies in waiting."

During this conversation Tory had crossed over to Miss Frean, persuading her to be seated on a low bench and sitting down beside her.

"I was deeply offended with you, Memory, an hour ago when you held a 'mirror up to nature,' my nature. I detest being lectured. Just the same, I promise to try not to bore Kara too much with my society and to give the other girls more opportunity. But dear me, I did think I was doing the right thing! Often I have wanted dreadfully to go off on our Scouting expeditions and have remained at camp because I thought Kara needed me and did not wish the other girls to be sacrificed. It does require an extraordinary number of virtues to be a good Scout."

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Memory Frean shook her head.

"I don't believe I would put the case in just that fashion, Tory. To be a good Scout demands first of all common sense. You have the artistic temperament, Tory, and common sense is perhaps more difficult for you. Glad you are willing to be friends again."

Memory Frean and Mr. Richard Fenton walked back together to the House in the Woods. They had not been alone with each other in more than twenty years.

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CHAPTER XIII

A PORTRAIT

SEVERAL days later Tory Drew, accompanied by two other of her Troop of Girl Scouts, went forth to spend the morning sketching, not far from their camp.

Her companions were Edith Linder and Martha Greaves, the English Girl Guide, who was her guest.

Personally Tory felt considerable embarrassment concerning her own neglect of the young English girl who had been left dependent in a measure upon her interest and friendliness. She had not intended any rudeness or indifference. Her greater interest and affection for Katherine Moore had dominated all other ideas and emotions.

Even before Miss Frean's lecture Tory had suffered an occasional moment of self-reproach. However, only within the past twenty-four hours had she talked over the situation frankly and openly with Martha and offered an apology.

It was delightful to have discovered her

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to be altogether sensible and agreeable. Apparently the young English Girl Guide had understood and accepted the circumstances. She not only failed to express any show of resentment at Tory's unintentional disregard of her, she appeared not to feel any resentment.

"It has all been a wonderful experience for me, the opportunity this summer to meet and know so many American Girl Scouts," she explained. "Nor has it been possible to feel either lonely or neglected. The other girls have been so friendly and interested. They have talked to me of your devotion to Kara and told me something of Kara's difficult life. I would not have you give up an hour when she needs you to look after me."

Tory was thinking of this and of other characteristics of the English girl, as she sat idly holding her sketch book open in her lap, a drawing pencil in her hand.

Martha and Edith had gone over into one of the fields to look for mushrooms. As Edith had spent the greater part of her life on a small farm, she possessed a good deal of practical outdoor knowledge which the other Girl Scouts were endeavoring to acquire through books and teachers.

Particularly was the English Girl Guide

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interested in learning all that was possible in one brief summer concerning the American woods and fields. Now and then they appeared oddly unlike her own green and fragrant country with its miles of cultivated gardens and carefully trimmed hedges.

Martha and Edith were especially friendly. Tory was possessed of sufficient knowledge of the world to appreciate this fact as indicating an unusual sweetness and poise upon the part of their English visitor.

Obviously Edith Linder came of simple people. Her father and mother had been poor farmers and were now working in a factory in Westhaven. Edith made no pretense of anything else and had not received a great deal of education. She had learned much from her winter with Miss Frean, and was learning through her summer with her Troop of Girl Scouts. Nevertheless, there were ways in which she revealed the difference in her past circumstances from the lives of most of the Girl Scouts with whom she was associated at present.

To Martha, Edith's lack of social training must have been especially conspicuous. Martha had been reared in a careful fashion. Her family had been wealthy before the war and owners of a large estate.

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Nevertheless the English Girl Guide accepted Edith's efforts toward self-improvement and her evident desire to make friends with perfect tact and good breeding.

Tory knew that social distinctions were more seriously regarded in England than the United States. She concluded if ever the moment were propitious to inquire of Martha if the Girl Guides represented an effort toward real Democracy in the sense the American Girl Scouts trusted that they represented the same purpose.

At length Tory took up her pencil and began drawing.

She was seated in an open place in the woods not far from their dancing ground within the circle of giant beech trees.

Later in the day Evan Phillips' mother was to give the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing their first lesson in outdoor dancing.

The thought of this in prospect interrupted Tory's effort. With an impatient gesture she picked up the paper upon which she was working and tearing it into bits flung the pieces to the winds.

Her father insisted that she draw from still life and she had been using a distant tree as her model.

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Is there anything in the world more difficult to represent with its dignity, grace and beneficence than a tree?

At this instant Tory certainly was convinced there was not.

Half unconsciously her pencil began indicating the figure of a girl in various attitudes.

For years, whenever left to her own devices, Tory had amused herself in this fashion. However crude her drawings of human figures, since she was a tiny girl they had in them a suggestion of life and action.

A noise, apparently coming from behind a clump of bushes not far off, distracted the artist's attention.

Tory raised her eyes.

Beyond the bushes she thought she beheld some one move.

"Martha, Edith!" she called out.

At first there was no reply.

The second call brought a response.

From farther away Martha and Edith halloed in Girl Scout fashion.

Again Tory returned to her work, having now acquired the impression that she was no longer alone.

Once more she looked suddenly around.

A figure behind the clump of shrubs undoubtedly stirred.

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Rising, Tory walked in that direction.

She had not moved more than a few feet when the intruder, aware of discovery, came toward her.

A small figure Tory beheld dressed in a pale green linen frock, crumpled and torn. The large leghorn hat had a band of green velvet ribbon encircling it. In one hand she bore a small yellow leather suit case.

"Why, Lucy, what in the world does this mean? Are you by yourself? Do Mr. or Mrs. Hammond know where you are?"

"No, you may tell them," the little girl answered calmly. "I am on my way to Kara. I am going to take her back to the Gray House or somewhere else, where we can be alone. I hated Kara sitting still in a chair and never moving and all of you keeping me from her."

"Then you do care for Kara?" Tory demanded, putting her arms about the picturesque little figure.

Coldly but politely Lucy drew away.

"Care? What do you mean? Do you mean do I love Kara? Why, I don't really like anyone else very well except Kara and perhaps Billy and now Mr. and Mrs. Hammond. Mrs. Hammond says I must be more

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devoted to her than any one else, but I'm not truly, now that I know Kara is ill."

"You have run away, haven't you, Lucy? I am sure I don't know how you ever got this far without some one stealing you. You are the most delightful looking child I ever beheld. Come and sit down for awhile and rest and eat some sandwiches. I know you ran away before breakfast and must be hungry and tired. Afterwards I'll take you to Kara."

A creative impulse had seized hold of Tory.

More than anything she could imagine at the moment she longed to make a sketch of Lucy, of the little figure in the pale green gown against the deeper background of green, the big hat hanging behind her shoulders. The child's cheeks were a vivid rose, her dark hair still in the stiff aureole that was unlike other children's.

But it was not the color that Tory wished to represent. That would have to come later. She must try to catch the grace of the small figure, sitting serenely on the ground a few feet from her munching sandwiches.

Tory would have preferred that her portrait model be engaged in some other occupation. But this made no special difference. By and by Lucy stopped eating and Tory, fascinated, went on with her drawing.

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CHAPTER XIV

DISAGREEMENTS

THE decision to take part with the Boy Scouts in the presentation of the Greek pageant representing the adventures of Odysseus was largely brought about through Mr. Richard Fenton's interest.

He it was who finally persuaded the Troop Captain, Sheila Mason, to give her consent. Of chief importance was her point of view, since she must be responsible for her own Girl Scouts.

For many years Mr. Fenton had been an enthusiastic Greek scholar. To him it appeared more than ordinarily worth while to stimulate among the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts an interest in the historic legends of the past. In his estimation the history of Greece was of greater importance than any other nation. In the history of Greece one finds the model of the first known Democratic government in the world and according to many historians the best.

The outdoor life of the American Scouts,

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planned to develop them mentally and physically, to make better citizens and wiser men and women, had its counterpart in the lives of the early Greeks, centered about their Olympian games.

A series of tableaux, accompanied by a recitation of the story of one of the two great Homeric poems, would not alone broaden the outlook of the young people who took part. Mr. Fenton had a shrewd idea that it would awaken among the older people in Westhaven a wider vision of beauty. Like most small towns, Westhaven was too self-centered. Mr. Fenton did not wish the little New England village to share in the opprobrium of "Main Street."

Why was it not a portion of the work of the Scouts to bring fresh ideals of beauty and romance into their own environments? Mr. Richard Fenton considered this an important part of their service.

To-day, seated with the fourteen Girl Scouts in a circle about her, Sheila Mason was wondering if she had not been more idealistic than practical.

The girls were in their own council chamber in Beechwood Forest. No one else was within sight or hearing.

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The story of the "Odyssey" lay open in Sheila Mason's lap.

Katherine Moore, in her wheeled chair, held another copy. Bending over her, reading from the same pages, were Margaret Hale and Louise Miller.

A few feet away Tory Drew and Dorothy McClain were writing on large sheets of paper the instructions that were offered them from time to time.

Teresa Peterson, slipping her handkerchief to her eyes, was wiping away an uncomfortable moisture. Her cheeks were deeply flushed and her lips tremulous.

Lucy Martin sat contentedly on a cushion at Kara's feet.

She had not been permitted to bear away the other girl as she had planned. However, she was allowed to stay on with the Girl Scouts in their camp for a visit which made her equally content.

To Mr. and Mrs. Hammond she had explained that she could not leave for two reasons. Kara needed her and Tory was making a picture of her. Either reason she considered sufficient. Apparently Mr. and Mrs. Hammond had agreed for the present.

"I believe, although the boys have left the

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final choice with us, that it will be best to follow their selection of characters," Margaret Hale remarked.

The Troop Captain looked up from her book, first toward Teresa and then Margaret.

"I do not see what else is possible under the circumstances. We are to make two or three changes, but they are not important ones. I am sorry Teresa is disappointed. She insists that Lance originally suggested to her she could represent Penelope, so I presume she has built upon the idea. Yet it does seem more appropriate for Joan Peters to play the part of the famous lady with the web, the wife of Odysseus. There is no question, Teresa, of your not acting as well, but this is scarcely a question of acting, but of appearing to the best advantage in the series of tableaux. And Joan does look more like one's conception of Penelope than you. Except for Lance McClain's suggestion to you, and he should not have expressed an opinion without consulting the others, the choice has always been between Dorothy McClain and Joan. The majority finally decided in favor of Joan because Donald McClain is to appear as Odysseus and Don and Dorothy are brother and sister. Perhaps there would be

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less illusion in having them represent a husband and wife."

"I suppose it is because Joan is taller and her features more regular and she is prettier, that she was chosen to play Penelope," Teresa murmured in an injured tone and with such a gentle suggestion of melancholy, that Joan Peters appeared extremely uncomfortable.

"I don't see it that way, Teresa, and I am perfectly willing to give up in your favor if the others will agree. Of course it is ridiculous to talk of any question of beauty having been considered. You know you are absurdly pretty, Teresa, and are merely trying to make some one say so," Joan remarked, half serious and half amused.

As a matter of fact, she was not enthusiastic over being chosen for one of the principal parts in the Greek tableaux.

She was not particularly popular with the Boy Scouts. The boys liked half a dozen of the other girls better, although Tory Drew, Dorothy McClain and Teresa were the chief favorites.

"See here, Teresa, don't be tiresome. If we were all to object as you do to the casting of the characters we will never get anywhere

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and spend the entire day in argument. Everybody knows I think it the greatest mistake in the world not to have had Dorothy in the leading rôle. Still, I am saying very little and apologize to Joan for what I have said," Louise Miller protested. "So let us get on with what we are trying to accomplish. Remember, we are to meet the boys and Mr. Fenton this afternoon and choose the place for our poetic drama."

Frequently Louise Miller was too impatient with Teresa's small frailties, her love of pleasure and admiration. This was hardly fair because of the difference in their temperaments making any sympathy between them almost impossible.

"Well there is one person whom we all agree to be the ideal choice," Dorothy McClain remarked, hoping to turn the conversation into more agreeable channels.

She had been sitting on the ground weaving a chaplet of beech leaves. Rising up now she placed it like a crown on Kara's brow.

"Behold Athena, the wise Goddess with the clear gray eyes!"

A little silence descended upon the group of girls.

Kara flushed.

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"It is the kindest and most ridiculous thing in the world to have *me* take part when I cannot stir from this chair. I don't want to seem unappreciative. I'm not really, you know, but do please explain to the Boy Scouts that they must realize it is out of the question," Kara argued.

"No, dear, we are not going to bring up that question again. Lance and Don and Jack Hardin told you that their entire Troop of Scouts wished you to play the 'Goddess of Wisdom.' The tableaux are to be arranged so you need not appear but once. Then you are to be seated upon a throne as Pallas Athena should be. You know how we all feel on the subject. Surely you do not wish to disappoint everyone," Tory protested.

She was wondering if the other girls had observed what she had. In these days of discussion of the Greek tableaux Kara had appeared brighter and more like her former self. Now and then even a glimpse of the old humor showed in the depth of her gray eyes or about the corners of her of late too serious lips.

"Tory has expressed what we all feel, Kara," Miss Mason added. "Now, Tory, please read aloud the list of the characters so

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far as they have been decided upon. I am delighted to know that the father of the Boy Scouts has agreed to be with us on the evening of the tableaux and will read selections from the Odyssey as the pictures are presented."

Tory glanced toward the paper in her lap.

"Donald McClain will be Odysseus; Lance McClain, his son, Telemachus; Joan Peters, Penelope; Victoria Drew, the Princess Nausicaa; Mr. Richard Fenton, Eumaeus, the aged servant of the Greek hero. The other Girl Scouts will be the ladies in waiting to Penelope and the Boy Scouts Penelope's suitors.

"I had forgotten to write down that Margaret Hale will be Arete and Jack Hardin the good King Alcinous, my respected parents. I am glad they assisted the wanderer to end his adventures and return to his faithful Penelope.

"Just as well that we decided to start our tableaux with the arrival of the hero on the island of the Sea Kings! I fear it would have taxed even our talents to have shown the enchanted spots where Odysseus was held enslaved by Calypso with the beautiful hair, who sang sweetly as she wove at her loom with the golden shuttle, or Circe, the sorceress,

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who mixed the drink in a golden cup that turned men into swine. Representing these Goddesses would have taxed our powers. Except for Kara we are only mortals."

Tory rose up.

"May I start with Kara to our dancing grounds? It may take me some time and Mrs. Phillips is to arrive in less than an hour for our first dance rehearsal. I have an idea, or perhaps a hope, that our Greek dance which Evan is to lead, will be one of the most beautiful, beautiful things that has ever been seen in Westhaven."

Tory reached Kara's chair, but at the same time Dorothy McClain pushed her gently away.

"Margaret and I are going to take turns in pushing Kara's chair to our dancing grounds. We have already made an engagement with her to that effect. Please remember we are both stronger persons than you, and Kara will arrive far more speedily and safely."

Tory appreciated that Dorothy was jesting, nevertheless, she bit her lips and frowned.

Kara's hand reached around and took hold of her's.

"You'll come along with us, won't you, Tory? I know I am selfish, but I do hate being

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separated from you. If there is time before Mrs. Phillips arrives why not attempt another sketch of Lucy? We thought the first sketch you made of her wonderful, even if you were not pleased."

In the last few days Tory had quietly been following Memory Frean's advice and allowing the other Girl Scouts to share in the care of Kara. As a consequence they did seem to feel more pleasure in being together. But then for more than one reason Kara was in a better state of mind.

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CHAPTER XV

THE CHOICE

AT four o'clock in the afternoon Mr. Fenton sent a large motor car to the Girl Scout camp to bear Kara, Miss Mason, Lucy Martin and any other girls who chose to ride to the place under discussion as the site to be chosen for the Greek pageant.

The spot lay midway between the two camps.

Earlier in the afternoon Miss Frean had started off with the girls who preferred the hike.

Walking steadily without pausing for rest, before the others they arrived at the proposed place.

When the signal was given to halt, Tory Drew dropped down on the ground and in the fashion supposed to be best for meditation sat looking about her.

Several of the other girls followed her example, while Miss Frean remained standing with three or four companions. They preferred to command a wider view of their surroundings.

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They had reached the source of the stream of water which ended in the small lake before the camp in Beechwood Forest.

Here the water was fairly deep but the stream of no great width. On one side was a small clearing with a grove of trees not far away. Where the Girl Scouts stood at present the open space was larger. A dozen yards away a country road connected with the state road that ran through the village of Westhaven.

Beyond were a rim of blue hills.

"I would not be surprised if we conclude this is the proper location," Miss Frean said reflectively. "There is the disadvantage of being so far from Westhaven. We shall have to transport the scenery and costumes out here and make arrangements for the audience to be seated. Yet the place itself is rarely lovely."

Tory looked at her beseechingly.

"The place is ideal. Please don't say a word against it. Uncle Richard insists that the early Greeks possessed a greater love of the beautiful than we possess. Yet surely this spot would have pleased them!

"Our tableaux can be shown on the other side of the water. The audience can be

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seated on this side. The distance will add to the illusion. The Palace of Odysseus with the courtyard in front where most of the scenes will take place, can be constructed in front of the grove of trees. Odysseus can land on what is supposed to be the island of the Sea-Kings from a Greek galley rowed up the stream. And I shall appear with my maidens who come down to the banks to wash the imperial clothes of my royal family. Until the moment to appear before the audience the players can be concealed beyond the trees."

Closing her eyes and clasping her hands ecstatically together, Tory exclaimed:

"Can you not see the entire scene, the beauty and glamour, what Uncle Richard calls the Greek spirit that we are to portray?"

Joan Peters laughed and shook her head.

"No, Tory dear, I am afraid not. We cannot all see it, although I must only speak for myself. Can't you appreciate that we are not all possessed of the artistic temperament and gifted with the power of seeing visions? I am a humdrum person who has to be shown."

Joan moved away to join another group.

"Tory, yours is a fortunate gift, I am not pretending to deny it. There are times when

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I envy you. Still, dear, some of us before we can behold the completed masterpiece, are obliged to consider how we can get a sufficient number of chairs out here to permit the audience to be seated comfortably," Memory Frean interposed.

The girl looked at her half challengingly.

"I am not so unpractical as you may think. Uncle Richard and I drove out here a few days ago and discussed the very problem of how to seat our audience. He promised to have any number of chairs sent out at his expense. We can guess the number required by the tickets we shall sell. I have an idea our audience will be very large. After paying for our costumes and scenery there will still be a good deal of money to be divided between the Boy Scout Troop and our own."

"A noteworthy conclusion, Tory. I am glad you have made the necessary decisions and arrangements without waiting for the other arrivals. A confusion of tongues just adds to a confusion of ideas," Lance McClain remarked, jumping from his bicycle and unexpectedly joining the small group.

Apparently he had ridden on ahead of his Scout Troop.

He turned now and greeted Miss Frean.

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Then he came over toward Tory.

"I don't wish to be teased, Lance. Of course I have not made any decision and nothing positive can be decided until the vote is taken. I have only been entertaining myself by dreaming that this is to be the chosen site. I can see a mental picture that is very wonderful."

Lance shook his head and laughed.

"I am not wishing to be disagreeable, Tory. Of course this is the ideal spot. It takes you and me to recognize the fact."

For some reason neither of them understood, Victoria Drew and Lance McClain usually argued unimportant issues and agreed upon the important ones.

From a little distance beyond, the rest of the Boy Scout Troop could now be seen approaching.

"Yes, Don will be here in a little while, Tory. Don't you and Dorothy worry. I rode over because the camp doctor thought I wasn't in very good shape. I am not in high favor at camp at present, so I thought I'd do what I was told on this occasion," Lance remarked.

Only three girls were sufficiently near at this instant to overhear his speech, Tory,

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Dorothy McClain and Louise Miller. The other girls and Miss Frean had moved over to meet the advancing Troop.

"What are you talking about, Lance? What have you done of late to break the camp discipline? If you don't care for your own sake, I think you might consider how much Don and I care for your Scout record. It was enough for you to have originated the ridiculous excursion that resulted in the trouble between your Troop and our own that has lasted until now. Please, please don't get into any more mischief."

In Dorothy's tone there was something maternal. Lance alone of all her brothers called forth this spirit in her.

"Sister of mine, you take me too seriously. I have only wandered off from camp now and then for a stroll in the woods. I am obliged to meditate. I have not broken any of the commandments. It is my misfortune to be unlike other people. You have told me this a good many times. So perhaps I am frequently misunderstood."

Lance's tone was so indifferent and teasing that Dorothy was seriously annoyed.

"I don't mind if Louise and Tory do hear what I have been wanting a chance to say to

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you, Lance. You had no right to tell Teresa Peterson that she would be chosen to play the part of Penelope in our Greek tableaux. She has been dreadfully disappointed and it has made things hard for all of us."

"Teresa Peterson to play Penelope! Who says I made any such suggestion, Dorothy? Teresa looks more like a pretty doll than the model of Greek faithfulness and propriety."

Dorothy looked puzzled.

"Teresa told me herself, Lance. She told me she had met you two or three times by accident and you had talked to each other for a little while. She seemed to feel she ought to speak of it to me and to Miss Mason. Teresa is a dear, but she isn't as clever as some of the other girls and I don't think you would ever care to be very intimate friends. She never could understand you as Tory and Louise do. You did tell Teresa she was to be chosen for Penelope, didn't you?"

Lance whistled.

"I suppose so, if she insists upon it."

"Well, I wish you would stick to one story or the other, Lance," Dorothy protested, moving away with Tory Drew and leaving her brother and Louise Miller together.

"I suppose there are not many things I

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would not forgive you, but I never should forgive your not being truthful."

Lance and Louise remained silent a few moments after the others had departed.

Reproachfully Louise studied the thin, eager face.

"Lance, I can guess it is in your code to protect a girl by telling a half truth. I suppose Teresa somehow got the impression she was to be chosen for Penelope without your having said so. She is a vain little thing. But what I want to say is, please never hurt Dorothy in order to protect anyone else. Perhaps she is only your sister, but she hates deceit more than anything in the world, and you know how devoted she is to you."

Lance frowned.

"See here, Louise, I'm not in the habit of telling fibs, so don't preach. I am not going to have Teresa suffer any more criticism from the rest of you girls. I have met her a few times and we have talked. She seemed to think perhaps it was a mistake as long as our two camps were not friendly, so I am glad she has spoken of the fact to Dorothy and Miss Mason. I wasn't going to say anything first.

"You need not worry over Dorothy and

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me, Ouida. We have our scraps now and then, but there isn't another girl I think holds a candle to her at present, not even you or Tory.

"By the way, we ought to be special friends. We are both 'different,' and no one ever really likes being. Dorothy says you have got some queer idea in your head that you would like to be a naturalist. That is almost as good as my wishing to be a musician, when we both have our own livings to earn, the sooner the better for ourselves and families. We aren't all Tory Drews in this world!"

Louise's earnest pale gray eyes with their dark lashes were staring intently at her companion.

"I agree with the first part of your speech, Lance, but I really don't understand what you mean about Tory," she returned.

"Don't you? Well, nothing important. Only Tory is one of the people who has talent and charm and things are going to be fairly easy for her compared to you and me. When the time comes for her to study art she will have her chance. Most people are fond of her. At present in our family old Don and father will do pretty much anything she asks. So I thought maybe you and I might be kind of

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special friends, Ouida. I may probably get into a scrape some day and not know the best way out and want your help."

"You can always count on me, Lance, if for no other reason than because you are Dorothy's favorite brother," Louise answered simply.

Observing that Miss Mason's car had arrived and several others, Lance and Louise moved toward the newcomers.

Three members of the Boy Scout Council and three other members of the girls had driven out with Mr. Fenton. It was rare in the history of the Scout movement that the girls and boys should take part in the same entertainment and the subject was being seriously considered.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE GREEK SPIRIT

"WHAT is the Greek spirit, Mr. Fenton?" During one of the rehearsals for the presentation of Odysseus, Lance McClain made this inquiry.

No one else among the group of boys and girls surrounding Mr. Fenton at the moment would have asked the question. Yet, overhearing Lance, a number of them stood waiting for the answer.

The weeks of outdoor work and study had awakened new ideas and interests.

Mr. Fenton did not reply immediately; instead, he appeared to be considering the question deeply.

Frequently he had talked of the Greek spirit. Therefore, what did he actually mean?

"I am glad you put that query to me, Lance," he returned finally. "Half a dozen times since we began our rehearsals I have spoken of the 'Greek spirit.' I have emphasized the wish that we reveal it in the presentation of our tableaux. One ought not to talk

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glibly and be unable to offer a simple definition.

"At least I can tell you what the 'Greek spirit' means to me and why I want us to give expression to it in our pageant.

"Try not to be bored if I discuss the subject seriously for a few moments. You know I have been a student, not a speaker, all my life, and there are times when we all wish for the gift of tongues."

Observing that Mr. Fenton was addressing not Lance alone who had asked the question, but the crowd of young people nearby, Memory Frean and Sheila Mason, Captain Curtis and several others came and stood on the edge of the crowd.

This afternoon they were together on the side of the stream of water where the tableaux would be presented.

In nearly every detail Tory had been correct in her original conception. The pageant would be presented in the clear green space with the grove of shadowy trees as background.

Across the water the audience were to be seated in a natural outdoor auditorium. On a slight elevation of land near the stream the Father of the Scouts, who had promised to appear for the evening's entertainment, would read aloud portions of the Odyssey.

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This afternoon, however, the Scouts were busy building and arranging details of the outdoor scenery.

It must be as simple as possible to serve their purpose.

Observing the crowd gathering about Mr. Richard Fenton, the builders also stopped their toil to join the others.

A rare experience had come to Mr. Fenton late in life, and although she never realized the fact, Tory Drew was chiefly responsible.

Almost as a recluse Mr. Fenton had spent the years of his middle age. He was under the impression that he was not sympathetic with most people and that they did not care for him. With a sufficient fortune for his needs, he had not found it necessary to engage in an occupation for the sake of making money. Therefore he had devoted most of his time to study and thought.

The result had not brought him a deep satisfaction. In his young manhood he had not planned this kind of existence.

He had contemplated being a public man, a statesman should he reveal the necessary ability. In those days he had been young and meant to make Memory Frean proud of him. They had separated and he had sought consolation among his books.

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Then into his own and his sister's well regulated lives Tory had entered the winter before. She was not Tory to them then, but Victoria Drew, as Miss Victoria Fenton still insisted upon calling her niece.

To Mr. Fenton the young girl had made an unconscious appeal. Lonely and feeling herself out of place in a new and strange environment, she appeared like a gay little tropical bird or flower transferred to a harsher environment. When he and Tory became friends the coldness of the old maid and old bachelor establishment changed to a pleasanter warmth.

Introduced to her girl friends, Mr. Fenton had become a member of their Scout Council. But not until this summer had he developed into their chief mentor, and fairy godfather.

Now to his surprise, added to his other unsought honors, he found himself the director of the Greek pageant, one of the performers as well, and far more popular with his fellow-players than he yet appreciated.

Daily they were coming to him with their problems and their ambitions. As yet their confidences related only to the approaching performance.

Lance's question was more general than any other that had been propounded. While

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Mr. Fenton was replying he looked at Lance with more interest than he had felt in the boy before.

If no one else understood what he was endeavoring to make plain, he believed that Tory and Lance would catch the import of his words.

"Among the nations the Greeks are rarely fortunate," Mr. Fenton began. "They left us such inheritances that we have remembered their great days; with other nations we are too apt to recall the years of their decay, their mistakes.

"Perhaps one reason for this is that the Greeks were our forefathers, a branch of the Aryan-speaking peoples who in the faint twilight of early history, a nomadic, wandering people, moved southward, and combined with the inhabitants of Crete. This gives us the story of the Odyssey, one of the two great Greek poems, but more filled with legend than the story of the Iliad, which is the siege of Troy."

Mr. Fenton paused.

"I am not tiring you too much? Still I must go on. We must try as far as we can to understand what we have undertaken to present to others. And I have not yet told you what I mean by the Greek spirit.

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"It revealed itself even as far back as these two poems. The Greeks were then possessed of two great passions, the love of adventure and the love of beauty. Those two possessions I want to be equally the heritage of the American Girl and Boy Scouts.

"Later, in what is known as the Age of Pericles, the Greeks entered into their third ardor, Democracy, the love of freedom. So what I call the Greek spirit is the love and pursuit of these three things: Beauty, Adventure, Freedom.

"I might talk longer and you would understand me less well. Understand, there may be danger in these three desires. One must not seek beauty, adventure and freedom at the expense of other people, but in order to share it with others as the Greeks have done.

"Now I am through with my lecture, will some one give me a hammer? I'll try to assist Don in building a footstool for one of Penelope's maids. I'm afraid I am no better carpenter than I am lecturer. Do you understand what I have been trying to explain, Lance? We may talk the question over together some other time."

Lance nodded.

"I think I do understand what it means in regard to the Scouts."

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A moment he stood dreaming when the others went back to work. Beauty, adventure, freedom, the Scouts were finding in the outdoors during the weeks of their summer camp.

At present in front of the grove of trees Mrs. Phillips was starting a rehearsal of the Greek dance that was to form a part of the coming pageant.

Fascinated, Lance stood watching.

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CHAPTER XVII

A CLASSIC REVIVAL

ONLY now and then does nature allow us a perfect thing.

The day of the presentation of the Greek poem of the Odyssey by the Girl and Boy Scouts was a perfect day.

It occurred during the last week in August. Here at the fringe of the deep woods the afternoon was like early September; there was more color, more radiance than one associates with any other month of the year.

Beyond the woods the wheat fields were golden, the final growth of the summer gardens a riot of purple and rose and blue. The corn fields having ripened, bent their green maturity to the breezes, the silk of the corn tassels made valiant banners. In the forests the beech trees showed bronze leaves amid the midsummer foliage, the sumach and the woodbine were flaunting the scarlet signals of autumn.

Along the road leading from Westhaven to the site in the woods where the Greek pageant

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would take place, from an early hour in the afternoon motor cars moved back and forth.

The first cars transported the players and their costumes and such odds and ends of scenery as had to be attended to at the last.

The same cars returned for the families and friends of the actors. Every automobile and carriage the town could spare for the occasion had been commandeered.

The interest the town of Westhaven and several neighboring villages displayed in the Greek pageant was beyond the realms of possibility in the original conception of the Girl and Boy Scouts.

But the summer was closing. In a short time a good many of the summer residents would be returning to their city homes. The thought of a final entertainment, a final memory of the summer days became inspiring.

Moreover, a Greek pageant was unusual presented by groups of American girls and boys. Probably they would make a failure of so ambitious an effort, yet it would be worth while to see.

The first arrivals among the audience found several hundred chairs placed in more or less orderly array upon one side of a stream that

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ran straight as a ribbon along this part of the countryside.

Upon an elevation a small platform had been constructed with a table and a chair so banked with golden rod and Michaelmas daisies and green boughs that the wooden outlines were concealed.

On the further side of the water was an ingenious structure, half palace and half tent.

The walls were of a heavy white canvas, the roof had been made of narrow lattice and this covered with green branches.

In front was the court yard of the palace. The furnishings were severely simple, a long bench and a table, a few straight chairs, little more than stools, and painted white to suggest marble.

No other paraphernalia of the approaching performance was visible.

Now and then a figure appeared from the background of trees, never one of the players, only some assistant bent upon an errand.

Not upon the shore-line supposed to represent ancient Greece, but immediately facing the audience waved a giant American flag. On either side were the Scout flags, one bearing the imprint of an eagle's wing, the insignia of the Girl Scouts, the other an elm tree, the flag of the boys.

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At four o'clock in the afternoon the pageant began.

Before that hour not only were the seats filled but a number of people were standing.

A guest of honor of the occasion was one of the distinguished men who originated the Scout movement for boys in the United States. Another guest of honor was a member of the National Girl Council, who had come up from the headquarters in New York for no other reason than to be present at the pageant.

With simple Scout ceremonies the entertainment opened.

A few moments after the applause had subsided, a beautiful resonant voice read aloud the first lines describing the Odyssey:

"Sing us the song of the hero, steadfast, skilful and strong,
Taker of Troy's high towers who wandered for ten years long
Over the perilous waters, through unknown cities of men,
Leading his comrades onward, seeking his home again.
Sing us the song of the Wanderer, sing us the wonderful song."

A moment later slowly rowing down the stream appeared a solitary figure, Odysseus, seated upon a raft to which were fixed sails and a rudder.

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Before reaching the place along the shore where the boat, built by Odysseus on the island of Calypso, was to land, a storm was supposed to beset the hero. The audience beholds him struggle with the storm and then reach a safe harbor.

On the shore he piles up branches and lies down upon a bed of leaves.

A short time passes and Odysseus sleeps.

This opening scene in the tableaux Donald McClain insisted was the most difficult in the entire program. During the rehearsals he had been possessed by the fear that he would not be able to produce the illusion, so that his audience would not take him seriously. Therefore, the tableaux would begin and end in disaster.

Don need not have troubled. Very handsome and heroic he appeared, his dark hair grayed to represent the age of the Greek hero who had wandered so many weary years after the siege of Troy.

While Odysseus slumbers the Princess Nausicaa and her maidens come down toward the river. Unaware of the sleeper, they begin washing their clothes in the river and afterwards spread them out to dry in the sun.

Victoria Drew, as the Princess Nausicaa,

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wore a gown of bright blue with a Greek design in silver braid. Her bright red-gold hair was bound in a silver fillet. Her maids were Margaret Hale, Edith Linder, Martha Greaves and Julia Murray. Their costumes were white and crimson, yellow and green.

In making a careful study of the costumes worn by the early Greeks, Miss Frean and the Troop Captain had been surprised to find that white did not play so important a part in their dress as they had supposed. Together with their love for the beauty of line and form the Greeks possessed an equal love for color.

Nausicaa and her maidens begin a game of ball on the sands. The princess misses the ball and as it rolls into the water she gives a cry that awakes Odysseus.

He comes forward and asks Nausicca's aid.

Together they move toward the palace of the Sea-kings, when the first tableau ends.

The second scene shows Odysseus seated inside the tent narrating his adventures to the good King Alcinous and his wife, Queen Arete.

Again the voice of the interpreter recited further lines from the Greek poem:

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"Hither, come hither and hearken awhile, Odysseus, far-famed king!
No sailor ever has passed this way but has paused to hear us sing.
Our song is sweeter than honey, and he that can hear it knows
What he never has learnt from another, and has joy before he goes;
We know what the heroes bore at Troy in the ten long years of strife
We know what happens in all the world, and the secret things of life."

A thrill of appreciation and sympathy stirred the larger portion of the audience at the outset of the next tableau.

Strangers, slightly puzzled to guess the cause, found that a few hurried words made the situation clearer.

Odysseus has sailed from Crete and comes at last to his own land.

No change of scenery was possible. The hearers learned from the recitation that he had reached the island of Ithaca. Here his ship was moored in a haven between two steep headlands near a shadowy cave, where the water-fairies come to look after their bees and weave their sea-blue garments on the hanging looms.

Odysseus, knowing not that he has reached

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his home at last, walks up the steep incline from the shore. Here he meets the Goddess of wisdom, Pallas Athena.

Contrary to her own judgment Katherine Moore had agreed finally to represent Athena; in spite of the difficulties to be surmounted not to have accepted would have been too ungracious.

From beyond in the grove of trees the Goddess advances. She is seated in a chariot drawn by four children. The children wore costumes of white, short skirts to their knees and sandals on their feet.

The Goddess herself was clad in white with a wreath of green leaves about her hair. Had the audience been closer she would have appeared a pale and fragile Goddess with wide gray eyes set in a delicate, bravely smiling face. For the oldtime Kara had been doing her best to return these days in order to cast no gloom upon the pleasure of her friends.

Better for Kara perhaps that the general effect of the tableau was what was desired and not a too apparent view of details!

This, however, was not true concerning the little group of children who drew the chariot.

So startling was Lucy Martin's beauty that not only the Girl Scouts and their older

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friends discussed it among themselves, the Boy Scouts, not so apt to notice a little girl's appearance, also spoke of it to one another privately.

Fortunately Lucy, in spite of her wilfulness, was not self-conscious.

To-day evidently she was thinking not of herself but of Katherine Moore and Billy, her former friends from the Gray House on the Hill.

A blond Cupid grown slightly older and thinner, Billy Duncan appeared, with his blond hair and large childish blue eyes and his somewhat expressionless face.

Either the performance of the Greek tableaux or the presence of the little girl who had so dominated him during the years they had spent together at the Gray House made Billy dazed and speechless.

There was no need, however, that he should use any intelligence save to do what Lucy commanded.

Her dark eyes sparkled with a brilliant excitement, her rose cheeks glowed. The stiff aureole of her dark hair made a striking contrast to the whiteness of her childish costume.

The other two children were acquaintances of Lucy's from the Gray House and equally ready to do her bidding.

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So, whatever the others may have believed, Lucy Martin was convinced that she had taken complete charge of Kara's tableau.

Watching the little girl, Kara in a measure forgot what she felt to be her own unfitness for her distinguished rôle.

Athena touches Odysseus with her magic wand and he changes into an old man, not wishing to be recognized on his return to his own palace. Athena's chariot is then drawn back into the grove of trees and Odysseus, now disguised as a beggar, once more sets out for his home. The Goddess has presented him with a worn coat which he places over his former costume.

The tableaux did not consume any length of time, scarcely longer than it requires in the telling, nevertheless the entire drama of Odysseus could not be unfurled in a single afternoon's pageant.

The meeting of Odysseus with the faithful steward, Eumaeus, played by Mr. Fenton, was presented without the details one finds in the story.

Immediately after the son of Odysseus, Telemachus, makes his appearance.

Neither Lance McClain nor Donald had ever acted until today.

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They had both been fearful that playing together would have its drawbacks, as one is inclined to be more nervous and critical with regard to one's own family. Actually the brothers were more surprised by each other than they could have surprised their audience.

The change in costume, the gray in his hair, the lines of makeup on his handsome boyish face, gave Donald a look of maturity, while Lance's slenderness and the fact that he was several inches smaller carried with it the necessary suggestion of graceful youth.

Together the father and son set forth to their home, crowded with the suitors who, believing Odysseus dead, have come to seek the hand of Penelope.

Instead of going directly to the palace they retire toward the woods to suggest a lapse of time.

So far the Greek tableaux had been dominated by single figures, chiefly the hero of the poem.

Now a change occurs.

In the courtyard before the palace Penelope is seen to appear accompanied by her maidens.

A serene and stately Penelope robed in ivory and gold, her ash-brown hair braided and

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coiled low on her neck, a gold band in her hair, Joan Peters had never looked so handsome.

About her the troop of maidens like a swarm of brilliant, many-colored flowers.

They moved from the yard and onto a broad space of ground untouched by tree or shrub. Here the grass had been closely cut so that it formed a velvet greensward.

Penelope stands in the background and her maidens advance.

They were sixteen in number and represented the four seasons.

As Kara's illness made it impossible for her to be of their number, the sixteen girls were not alone Girl Scouts from the camp in Beechwood Forest. Four of them were gowned in white, four in pale green, four in blue and four in scarlet.

Their costumes were like the simple, flowing draperies of the Greek dancing girls seen upon the friezes of the ancient Parthenon at Athens.

Carefully Mrs. Phillips had made a study of every detail of Greek dancing and costuming. Anxious to impress the people of Westhaven with her ability as a teacher of dancing, she appreciated that no such opportunity as the present one would be offered her again.

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Evan Phillips was to lead the Greek Dance of the Four Seasons; one of the dancers representing winter, she was dressed in white and silver.

Advancing, the entire line made a streak of rainbow beauty upon the farther edge of the silver stream of water.

The line recedes, forming a crescent about the solitary dancer.

Then Evan danced alone. Her dancing was a series of graceful gestures, of movements of her arms and postures of her body, not toe dancing or a skilful employment of her feet, such as we associate with modern dancing.

In the midst of her dancing she summons the four seasons to advance. Winter comes first. They seem to be blown forward by a gust of winter wind that sets them dancing and shivering forward. Supposedly the snow falls and their arms, partly covered by delicate white draperies, are raised as a shield.

The sun shines, the snow melts and they move backward to give place to the birth of spring, the four Girl Scouts in shimmering green costumes.

The dance of the Spring recalled Evan Phillips' dance of the young beech trees, save that it was more stately. As far as possible

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her mother had adapted her idea to the Greek model.

Summer follows spring and the dance suggests the blossoming of the flowers. The scarlet succeeds the blue and autumn comes with its portents of flying leaves and birds moving southward.

The dance ends and for the first time the audience broke into enthusiastic applause. Nothing so beautiful had ever been witnessed in Westhaven!

Penelope and her maidens return to the palace. Later Odysseus wanders into his own home, unrecognized by his family and friends.

The Girl Scouts composed the household of Penelope, the Boy Scouts found their opportunity as the impatient suitors of the lady Penelope. They remain about her palace, playing at games, feasting and wasting her substance and that of her son, Telemachus. The hour must be near when she shall make up her mind who is to fill the place of her lost husband, Odysseus.

In the games that took place the Boy Scouts found their chance to exhibit their prowess in outdoor sports.

Penelope fetches the bow and the quiver full of deadly arrows. She then goes to meet the

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princes, her attendants following carrying the axes.

To the suitor who wins at the trial of the bow Penelope vows to give herself in marriage.

Odysseus, with as little trouble as a minstrel fits a new cord to his lyre, bends the mighty bow with an arrow caught up from the table at his side.

Even when the bronze-tipped shaft goes clean through twelve axes set up in a row, the blinded Penelope fails to know her lord.

The last scene reveals Odysseus, his shabby coat cast aside, his figure no longer bent and aged, a shining hero seated opposite Penelope in the courtyard of his home, united at last after long parting.

The Greek tableaux were over. Within a quarter of an hour the audience departed for their homes, the Girl Scouts to their own camp and the boys to their's on the other side of the hill. Yet not until bed-time was any other subject discussed by the players and their audience than the surprising success of the Greek pageant given that afternoon in the familiar setting of the New England woods.

So the beauty of the past held its re-birth in the present.

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE PASSING

OUTSIDE the opening into her tent Teresa Peterson sat presumably playing upon the banjo. The sounds she was making were not particularly pleasing. Yet the camp was fairly deserted. Only a few of the other girls were to be seen and they were busy and nowhere near Teresa.

In fact, the camp in Beechwood Forest would be vacant within the next few days. Summer was closing with the soft loveliness that makes one forgive and forget her less charming moods.

Already the evergreen house, which had been the center of the camp life, was being dismantled.

Katherine Moore had returned to the Gray House on the Hill. After the performance of the Greek tableaux she had not been so well and Dr. McClain had additional reasons for desiring her presence in town at this time.

Impatient always to fulfill his own wishes, no sooner was Mr. Hammond aware of Kara's

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departure to town than he requested permission to have the floor of the old cabin removed and the search begun. Kara was not to be told of the effort until the work was accomplished. Not one chance in a thousand, Mr. Hammond agreed, that any trace of Kara's past history be located here, therefore she had best not be excited or worried until the task was finished.

This afternoon, as Teresa twanged at her banjo strings, she looked oftener than was good for her music at the group of men who were at work in the evergreen cabin.

So far they had only started the removal of the old boards.

When this was concluded the Girl Scouts had determined to organize the searching parties among themselves. Mr. Hammond would join them; no one else was supposed to feel a sufficiently keen interest in the investigation to be allowed to take part.

In spite of her music Teresa observed Lance McClain coming toward the Girl Scout camp when he was still some distance away. He was not wearing his Scout uniform as might have been expected.

Even at a distance Lance appeared unlike the other boys. He was smaller than a num-

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ber of them, more slender and graceful. He had a peculiar carriage of the head. He seemed to bend forward slightly and yet his eyes were nearly always upturned. He apparently did not look at the objects directly in front of him.

"Hello, Lance, I am awfully glad to see you! I was feeling dull," Teresa called out. "How did you happen to walk over to camp and not be wearing your uniform? Miss Mason is lying down in her tent; if you like I'll tell her you are here and then you can stay and talk to me, or else I'll play to you."

Lance made a funny grimace.

"Thanks awfully, Teresa, but I want to see Dorothy for a special reason. I can't stay long. I wonder if you will tell me where I can find her?"

Teresa frowned.

"I thought you always claimed to be fond of music, Lance, so I don't see why you need be in such a hurry."

Again Teresa twanged at her banjo, a little angrily on this occasion, so that the boy's sensitive face twitched.

"Oh, for goodness sake don't make that noise, please, Teresa, and don't be annoyed. I'd like to talk to you if I had time. I don't

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think I am fond of the banjo as a musical instrument, but I've simply got to find Dorothy. If you don't know where she is will you ask Miss Mason? Tell her it is important or I would not have appeared. Oh, yes, I know the Boy Scouts are more welcome visitors at present than they were, still I really have too much else to do ordinarily!"

So worried was Lance's expression that Teresa relented.

"You might tell me what you have on your mind. If you don't wish to, why, I do know where Dorothy is. She and Tory Drew and Louise and little Lucy rowed over to the other side of the lake, not far off. If you are in a hurry you can take the other canoe and join them. It will require less time than walking around the shore and I'll go with you if you'd like to have me come."

Lance flushed.

"You will think I am rude I am afraid, Teresa, but it is rather a private matter I want to talk over with Dorothy, so if you don't object I'll row over alone. Some other time you and I——"

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, it does not make any difference," she returned, and began humming a gay little tune and playing more softly.

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As he entered the silver canoe and started paddling across the shallow lake Lance regretted his decision. His was a nature not so uncommon as people suppose. He disliked hurting people in small ways, in larger and more important ways he was apparently indifferent.

He liked Teresa and thought her extremely pretty.

After all, Dorothy would not be alone, although they could go off somewhere nearby together. Yet Lance knew he would not particularly object to the presence of Louise Miller and Tory Drew.

No difficulty arose in discovering the group of girls. Before Lance shoved his boat from the shore he observed them at a point about three-quarters of the way down the opposite shore. He could not distinguish one from the other nor tell the exact number.

As he approached nearer he observed that Tory was seated with an easel in front of her, and at a short distance away Lucy was posing. The other girls were not in sight.

So intent was Tory upon her work that she did not see Lance until he was within a few yards. Then he called out to her, and Lucy, glad of a chance to change her position, ran down to meet him.

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They came up hand in hand.

"Not so bad, Tory, for a girl, and one no older than you!" Lance murmured, staring at the drawing of the youthful artist, his brows drawn into a fine line, half of criticism, half envy.

Donald and Dorothy McClain and most of her younger companions would have felt only enthusiastic admiration for Tory's work. Had they known, Lance's attitude was more flattering. He expected more of Tory's ability than the others knew how to expect.

She shook her head.

"This is my third attempt, Lance, to make a picture of Lucy that I shall be willing to submit to the judges in our Council or show father. I can't try again, we are going away from camp so soon. Now and then I think this may do, and at others I am discouraged. I must not talk about myself. How did you happen to turn up here? Are you looking for Dorothy? I hope there is nothing the matter, you are so serious."

Before it became necessary for Lance to reply a voice interrupted him.

Overhearing the conversation, Dorothy and Louise Miller, who had not been far away, were returning.

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With an unexpected display of affection, Dorothy McClain, not accustomed to showing her emotions, put her arm through her brother's and held tight to him.

"What are you doing not in your Scout uniform, Lance? We were just saying that it was too dreadful to think that our summer camping days in Beechwood Forest would soon be a thing of the past. Nevertheless, I will be kind of glad to return to my own family. Tory and Ouida and I have been making all sorts of plans for the winter. You must help us with some of them, Lance, you and Don."

"Afraid I won't be able to, Dorothy," Lance answered in an odd voice.

The three girls studied him more intently.

Lucy, seldom interested in the conversation of older persons, had wandered away and was throwing pebbles into the clear water.

"Why not, Lance? You are not usually unaccommodating, and though you may consider you are wasting your valuable time to spend any of it with girls, you won't count Tory and Ouida and me with the others?"

"I won't be at home next winter, Dorothy, at least I think not. I came out to camp this afternoon to have a private conversation with

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you, but if Ouida and Tory won't be bored I don't mind if they hear what I wish to say. Perhaps if you don't see things my way to the extent I want you to, they may help me."

Dorothy looked frightened. "Oh, Lance! What in the world are you going to propose? Please don't ask me to take your part if you have been having an argument with father. I may not think you are in the right. Suppose we have afternoon tea before you tell us anything. We brought the tea things over in the canoe and Ouida and I have been collecting the materials for a fire."

Doggedly Lance shook his head.

"No, it will take more than a half hour before the water can possibly boil. I can't wait so long.

"I have had an argument with father, Dorothy. I don't see how you managed to guess. I went in to see him yesterday and stayed all night at home. We talked until after midnight. I am going back home now after I have confided in you, so I did not care to wear my uniform."

As if she suddenly had grown tired, Dorothy seated herself on the ground, Lance standing above and staring down at her an eager, appealing light in his brown eyes.

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Embarrassed by their own position, Tory and Louise were moving away when a swift inclination of Lance's hand beckoned them to remain.

"I want you to stay, please do. I believe Dot is going to be difficult. I did not think so when I came out to talk things over with her. She is always claiming that I am her favorite brother yet when it comes to a test she is far oftener on any one's side than mine."

"That is not because I do not care for you but because I feel you are often wrong, Lance, and for your own sake I am obliged to differ with you," Dorothy answered, as if she were on the defensive.

"Oh, well, all right, here goes. Perhaps I am wrong again," Lance returned. "Nevertheless you and father might as well understand that I am in earnest and sooner or later mean to have my way."

At this instant Lance sat down beside his sister, Tory and Ouida following his example, but a few feet away as if they were interested but reluctant.

Persuasively Lance placed his arm around his sister.

"Dot, does it ever occur to you that a fellow may have a right to his mistakes? The rest

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of my family is so almighty sensible that if I am never to be allowed to have my own way I'll never learn anything.

"Do you remember about two weeks ago when Mr. Fenton talked to us about the Greek spirit? He said that to him it represented, beauty, adventure and freedom."

Dorothy sighed.

"Dear me, Lance, I was afraid at the time you might take Mr. Fenton's speech personally! What are you planning to do in quest of beauty, freedom and adventure?"

Dorothy's expression was worried but amused, and Lance flushed. Upon only one subject was he particularly sensitive, his devotion to music and his own lack of any knowledge of it.

In a measure his sister could surmise something of what he had in mind.

"My effort was not to be a very serious one, Dot," he said slowly; "at least I did not feel it so until after my talk with father. He seems to have gone up in the air. I don't want to spend next winter in Westhaven. I simply can not endure any longer never having music lessons from any one who knows how to teach and not even hearing any music worth listening to."

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Lance set his teeth.

"I don't ask anyone to understand, you can't if you try."

Dorothy's blue eyes grew more troubled.

"I know, Lance, but I do try," she returned. "And I would give anything, make any sacrifice I knew how to make if father were willing or had the money to send you to New York to study. But he is not willing and he has not the money."

"I know, that is just it. I don't mean to ask him for money. I have been writing letters to people in New York and trying to get work and now I have succeeded in landing something that will give me enough to live on, so you won't have to worry."

"But, Lance, there is school. You are only fifteen and you can't stop school, it is even against the law. You must have pretended you were older."

"I can go to school at night when I have finished working; I explained this to father," Lance argued patiently.

"What about the music? When will you have money or time for lessons?" Tory interrupted, not intending to intrude upon the discussion, but in her interest forgetting her resolution.

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A little less self-confident Lance appeared.

"Honestly, I don't know, Tory," he replied. "I think I feel that if once I get where music is, the opportunity will come to me as rain and sunshine come to trees and the things that need them. Gee whiz, I am talking like a poet or a girl! Father would not think this line of conversation convincing. You'll think up a better line of argument, won't you Dorothy? Then when your time comes and you want something a whole lot I'll do my best for you."

"But, Lance, I —" Dorothy hesitated— "I don't want you to go away from home; I don't think it best for you. You ought to wait several years anyhow. You are not strong and you'd be ill. You don't believe it, but father cares more for you than for the rest of us because you are more like mother. Please put things off a while longer in your own mind. Truly, father will not consent for the present."

Lance got up.

"All right, Dorothy, don't say anything to father on the subject. If you try to do your best for me what you really think will be plain enough. I am sorry to have interrupted you; I'm off."

Nor would Lance remain in spite of the pleading of his sister and friends.

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Disconsolately they watched the slender figure in the canoe push away from shore.

Afterwards they made no pretence of cheerfulness. Tory would not return to her drawing; Dorothy was too depressed even to assist in making tea.

An hour later they were on the way back to their own camp.

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CHAPTER XIX

LETTERS

MR. JEREMY HAMMOND personally conducted the search.

The evergreen cabin had been erected without foundation save a number of cross beams. There was no cellar except one a few feet square under the small room that served as a kitchen. The logs that upheld the old house were singularly free from decay.

Standing upon one of them, a line of Girl Scouts on either side of him, Mr. Hammond gazed downward with an air of discouragement.

"I am obliged to confess I see no place that gives one a right to believe we shall discover a secret treasure," he remarked. "I am glad Kara is unaware of our effort. I was wrong in speaking to her on the subject. I suppose I am hopelessly romantic and have been cherishing the idea of some day discovering further information about the little girl I rescued a number of years ago. We shall find nothing here."

Tory touched him on the arm.

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"Please, Mr. Hammond, don't let us start out upon our search in such a hopeless spirit. I feel as you say you do about Kara. Ever since I met her I have been convinced we would learn that she had a delightful background of some kind, which would explain why she is so brave and charming."

Mr. Hammond smiled.

"No, Tory, I cannot go so far as you. I have never anticipated so much. Besides, I do not consider it necessary. Personality is the strongest force in the world, not the question of one's immediate ancestors. I am not decrying the ancestors, only if one possesses an unusual personality it may come from further back in the stream of life and the stream was the same for us all in the beginning.

"I have merely hoped to come across a clue which might give Kara an idea of her parentage, or perhaps, a relative who would be kind and interested in her."

Tory looked disappointed.

"Kara has plenty of people who are interested in her, and friends may be as satisfactory as relatives." In this sentiment Mr. Hammond may or may not have agreed. Already he had commenced tapping on the logs with the end of his cane and digging

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underneath in any stray spot that he hoped might develop into the receptacle of a box or treasure of some kind.

The girls went about upon their own quests. Unfortunate that there was no greater amount of space, no secret chambers and passages to be investigated. This would have lent a glamour, a romance that nothing about the little evergreen cabin afforded.

An hour and the exploration became of necessity over.

Nothing of any interest had been unearthed.

Disconsolately Mr. Hammond seated himself upon an upturned stool. A few of the Girl Scouts clustered about him; the others unwilling to give up, were still poking about in unlikely places.

Alone Tory Drew's original ardor continued unquenched.

All day she had a vision of herself going to Kara at the old Gray House with information that would bring a new happiness into the clear gray eyes grown so wistful in these weeks of a summer time they had thought to be so happy.

No one place had been more thoroughly searched than the corners of the old brick fireplace that divided the living room and the kitchen with a single chimney.

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Yet kneeling down once more Tory began a last search, poking about into impossible crannies.

Exhausted, she finally surrendered. No reward was to be theirs, and they had only been wasting valuable energy and time.

Nevertheless Tory did not feel in the mood for discussing this obvious fact with the others.

Near the old fireplace was a small collection of loose bricks. Arranging them into a low square Tory seated herself, leaning her head against the left corner of the chimney.

Suddenly she had a sensation of dizziness. Her head seemed to be swimming from the fatigue perhaps and the disappointment of her futile search.

She straightened, biting her lips and wondering why she was not more physically uncomfortable than she felt herself to be.

Then hearing a crumbling noise behind her, Tory turned her eyes. The bricks against which her head had been resting had been loosened. She had not been dizzy, the movement had taken place *in them.*

Picking up a stick that lay beside her feet she thrust it idly inside a tiny crevice.

Actually by this time Tory had lost interest in what had been an ardent enthusiasm earlier in the day.

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She was excited, however, when a brick, displaced from its former position, tumbled to the ground, yet for the moment uttered no exclamation that might attract attention.

Thrusting her hand into the opening she tugged at another brick The exertion was unnecessary. It yielded at once to her touch. Two other bricks were as easily removed.

Tory then discovered a hollow opening several feet deep.

There was nothing visible inside; the space appeared dark and empty.

Then Tory did call out and Mr. Hammond and the group of Girl Scouts crowded close about her.

"Would you mind thrusting your hand inside and seeing if there is anything stored away? I don't think it very nice of me to ask you because I am afraid of touching something spooky or clammy. Do you mind?"

Apparently Mr. Hammond did not object. Unmindful of his coat sleeve, he was thrusting the entire length of his arm into the hollow recess."

"I wonder if this was not a Dutch oven that was covered over when it failed to be used. In that case I may find a petrified loaf of bread or pumpkin pie," Mr. Hammond

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remarked in a slightly ironical tone, bored by this time.

An instant later his expression altered sufficiently for the group of girls watching to become conscious of the change. The next he drew forth a small package of letters tied together with a worn cord.

Were they of the remotest interest or value?

No one could say. At least the audience was willing to offer them the benefit of an investigation.

Joan Peters went away to her tent, returning with a candle.

If there was anything else inside the dark enclosure the lighted candle would show it forth.

Except for the letters the recess was empty.

Mr. Hammond continued to hold the packet and stare at it.

"Don't you think you had best open the letters and read what they say?" Tory asked restlessly, wishing that Mr. Hammond would give her the opportunity. After all, she had been the real discoverer, even if her hands had not first touched the yellowed papers. Perhaps they would contain thrilling information for Kara. She might be an heiress or possessed of a more romantic heritage.

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Mr. Hammond appeared doubtful.

"I don't know; I don't feel as if I were at liberty to open the letters. I have no authority and they can have no association with me. Perhaps I had best speak first to Dr. McClain and then take them to Kara."

"But, Mr. Hammond," Dorothy McClain protested, "why should you conclude that a small package of letters discovered in the way that we have come across these can have any connection with Katherine Moore? The letters may have been thrust into the old fireplace to burn and been forgotten. Surely there can be no objection to your looking over them first! Then you may be able to decide to whom they should be presented. After all, the little evergreen cabin belongs to our Troop of Girl Scouts. Mr. Fenton bought the place and gave it to us. You have our permission. Besides, we would like to look at the letters with you. I am so excited I really cannot endure to wait any longer."

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CHAPTER XX

LOOKING FORWARD

DEVOTED attention to every line contained in the little package of letters failed to develop information which appeared to be of interest to Katherine Moore or any one else.

Carefully each line was read by Mr. Hammond and the Girl Scouts on the afternoon of their discovery. Later the letters were given to Dr. McClain and to Mr. Hale, Margaret Hale's father, who was a prominent lawyer, for an equally painstaking perusal. They agreed that they were merely a trivial collection such as any one might receive from a dozen friends, preserved for the sake of the affection, not the value of the communications.

There were no papers save the letters.

Only one or two seemingly unimportant details connected the letters in any possible fashion with Katherine Moore. Three of them were signed with the initials O. M., which may or may not have had any association with the name Moore. In point of fact,

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it would have appeared a straining of the imagination, save that the name Moore was signed to one short note.

In any case, it was agreed that, since there was no one else to claim them, the little package might be consigned to the girl who was discovered as a baby in the forsaken cabin. No one had been known to be living there at the time, so there was no reason to believe otherwise than that the baby had been carried there and immediately abandoned.

As Dr. McClain was at present seeing Kara daily at the Gray House, the letters were given to him for safe delivery. Not until twenty-four hours after was Tory Drew permitted to call and find what the influence and effect of so unsatisfying a communication had been.

She found Kara in the big room downstairs which had been given over to her use since her accident whenever she was living at the Gray House.

When Tory entered the room Kara must have been re-reading the letters, since they lay open upon her lap.

"You were not disappointed over our discovery, dear? The letters do mean something to you? You have the faith to believe that something important to *you* will develop from them some day? I believe it if you do."

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Kara laughed.

"Beloved Tory, if with all your imagination and sense of romance you could find nothing of value in the old letters why expect it of a practical, matter-of-fact, stupid person like I am? The letters are ridiculous to my mind so far as they are supposed to have any reference to me."

Still the gray eyes were shining and to-day Tory beheld the half quizzical lines about the lips that belonged to the Kara of other days.

"But if you have no faith in the letters, why do you seem so much happier and like your old self?" she queried.

Her companion hesitated.

"Hasn't Dr. McClain told you?"

"He has told me nothing save that I might come to see you if I would not stay too long, which is the permission he gives to all our Girl Scouts."

Kara's voice was steady with the old-time gentle drawl.

"Promise me then not to expect too much or be too disappointed if things do not turn out altogether well? Of course I am happier to-day, happier than a dozen letters proclaiming me an heiress could ever make me.

"Dr. McClain and two other surgeons who

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have seen me believe there is a possibility I may be well. They are not absolutely sure. Don't look so queer, Tory."

"I don't look queer, go on," the other girl whispered, bending her face down so that her lips touched Kara's hair and her face could not be seen.

"There isn't anything else to tell, except that I am to go to New York City to be treated and to spend the winter and that Mr. Fenton and Mr. Hammond and Dr. McClain and several other people have made the arrangements and will pay all my expenses."

Here for the first time Kara's voice trembled.

"Who says one cannot have beautiful things happen to one even if lost letters do prove disappointing?"

She put out her hand and caught hold of her companion's.

"Tory, you don't think I have failed to appreciate your loveliness to me this summer. All the time when I have appeared most ungrateful I have cared most. I won't talk about it now, only as you are an artist you understand better than I how one may see things in a wrong perspective. My view is clearer now whatever happens."

Tory kneeled down:

"I wish I might be Ruth to your Naomi."

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CHAPTER XXI

KARA'S DEPARTURE

BELIEVING that it would do his patient no possible injury, Dr. McClain agreed that Kara should see as many of her friends as she desired upon the last few days before departing for New York City.

Every spare hour Kara and Tory were together. The last few days Miss Victoria Fenton had asked Kara to stay with them at their home in the village. Farewell could be more easily said from there than at the Gray House on the edge of the town. There would be less difficulty in finally getting away.

Dr. McClain was to accompany Kara to New York in order to see the New York physicians. Mr. Jeremy Hammond had offered to motor them down, as he owned a handsome car and Kara would be spared having to be lifted in and out of the train.

Kara's farewell Scout meeting was by her own request a quiet one. No one would be present save the Scout Captain and her own Patrol. There was only one other person

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who would come for half an hour to say good-by, Memory Frean.

Fortunately the Fenton house had a bedroom on the first floor, so that Kara could be comfortable without the problem of the stairs.

One admirer Kara had acquired without realizing the fact. She was to make the discovery on the afternoon that she and Miss Victoria Fenton sat talking, waiting for Tory to announce that preparations were ready for tea.

From the beginning of Tory's first acquaintance with Katharine Moore, Miss Fenton had been quietly watching the other girl. She had liked Kara's fashion of never referring to the difference between her own life and that of her more fortunate friends. When it was natural to mention the orphan asylum, where she made her home, always she spoke of the place with affection, never criticism or resentment.

Knowing nothing of her parentage, Miss Victoria concluded for reasons of her own that Kara had come of well-bred people. And she meant more than ordinary breeding. She was under the impression that Kara revealed rare tact and sweetness in a difficult situation. Now and then she considered that her attitude

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bore a quality of high courage. But not until after Kara's accident was Miss Fenton convinced that courage was the characteristic that lay behind her other attributes.

In the twenty-four hours the young girl had been her guest with the prospect of such a test of patience and fortitude before her, Miss Victoria had surrendered completely.

Silently Tory Drew had been aware of Miss Victoria's state of mind. She had observed a new tenderness in the older woman's manner and voice whenever she spoke or looked at her guest that she never had seen her display.

This afternoon on the day before Kara's departure, when Miss Victoria entered Kara's bedroom, with a hurried excuse Tory withdrew.

Kara, who was lying on a couch in a dark corner of the square old room, struggled to sit up as the older woman entered.

With hands that were large and kind the older woman pushed her gently back upon the pile of soft cushions.

Then, untying a parcel and flushing as if she were embarrassed, Miss Victoria laid a dressing gown over the reclining figure.

The gown was a beautiful one, with nothing of the plainness or severity one might have

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imagined Miss Victoria would choose. It was of blue silk, the shade known as old blue, indescribably deep and soft in tone. The lining was of pale gray. A little hood hung at the back and a cord was knotted about the waist.

Kara might wear it for a number of occasions. She could receive guests in it, as it would doubtless be difficult for her at all times to be formally dressed.

Kara's voice shook a little as she touched the silk with one hand and caught Miss Victoria's hand with the other.

"Everybody is being too good to me. I wonder if it is going to make it harder or easier for me this winter. I shall miss my friends the more and at the same time want to show them how deeply I appreciate what is being done. May I write to you now and then, Miss Victoria?"

Miss Fenton showed and expressed pleasure, although she had written her niece only a single letter in more than a month's absence from the village.

"I have something else for you, Kara, something I want you to prize, not because of its great value but because it means a great deal to me.

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"It was given me by the bravest person I have known. I will not tell you about him now. Perhaps I will some day. If ever life seems to be too difficult for you, my dear, you must tell me and then perhaps my story may help you find new courage. Please don't speak of this to any one except to say I wished to give you the little pin as a parting gift."

As Tory softly turned the handle of the door to come back into the room and announce the Girl Scouts, she observed Miss Fenton stoop and pin at Kara's throat a small pin. As she came nearer she saw that it was a beautiful sapphire set in an old-fashioned band of gold. In truth, the pin was handsomer than either girl appreciated.

A moment later, before Kara could thank her properly, the older woman hurried away, insisting she had a household duty to look after.

The Girl Scouts had been warned.

Kara's farewell to her Patrol must be as casual and matter-of-fact as possible. There must be no heroics at parting; she would leave in the early morning and must reserve all her strength.

At shortly after five o'clock the girls and the Troop Captain had departed and Kara was

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again lying down alone until the evening meal.

Afterwards Dr. McClain and Dorothy were to come in for a few moments.

Kara and Tory, Miss Victoria and Mr. Richard Fenton were in the drawing-room when they entered. Unexpectedly Lance accompanied them.

"We did not intend allowing Lance to appear, Kara," Dorothy apologized, "but he insisted he had something of special importance to say to you and never had been allowed the opportunity, you have been so surrounded."

Not long after, stating that he was satisfied with her condition, Dr. McClain departed to call upon another patient. A few minutes later Miss Victoria and Mr. Fenton left the drawing-room to the younger guests.

Kara was in her wheeled chair. Lance was standing near her. Dorothy was seated on a stool nearby, while Tory remained on the rug with her back to the fire, facing the others.

Dorothy smiled.

"Do you remember, Kara? Tory is wearing a green dress tonight as upon the occasion of our first visit to this drawing-room to ask her to become a Girl Scout. Dear me. what is that commotion?"

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The two girls ran over toward the window. Lance had the thoughtfulness to wheel Kara's chair so that she might equally gratify her curiosity.

Tory had drawn up the curtain and the four of them could see a small group of figures standing in the street beneath the drawing-room window.

There was a light coating of snow on the sidewalk.

"What in the world is the matter?" Dorothy asked anxiously. "Isn't Don one of the boys down there? I wonder what they intend?"

Lance made an odd grimace.

"Intend? Good gracious! I always felt Don had no sense of humor, but this is worse than I feared.

"Don't you girls appreciate the fact this is to be a farewell serenade for Kara? Yet Don has read 'Seventeen'! They are half a dozen of the Boy Scout Band."

"It is very kind of them, I am sure; no reason for you to be so superior, Lance," Tory answered.

Outside the musicians were beginning the strains of "Auld Lang Syne" and the little crowd inside the room were silent, Tory thrusting the girl for whom the honor was

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intended into the most conspicuous position and a moment later wrapping a blue scarf about her thin shoulders.

With their heads close together they listened and watched.

"What are we to do when they have finished, Tory, to show our appreciation?" Kara whispered. "I am afraid Dr. McClain would not be willing to have me see them. Shall I go to my room while you receive them?"

"No," Tory shook her head, glancing about the room. On a center table was a bowl of red roses, the flowers Mr. Fenton cared for most, that he had brought as a farewell offering to Kara.

Tory gathered half a dozen in her hands.

"Throw these out and wave good-night," she murmured.

Kara was not able to reach so far and seemed shy at making the attempt, so that the other girl threw the roses and saw them fall, crimson spots of color on the white snow

Don picked one up and waved it, lifting his hat. The other boys followed his example.

"Good-night, good-by, Kara," they called.

Donald's last glance and good-by was for Tory Drew.

As they closed the window and reluctantly

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turned away, Dorothy McClain wore an unusual expression. She was frowning and biting her lips, her color warmer than usual.

"Do you know, Tory, I believe Don is growing to be as fond of you as of me."

She slipped her arm through Lance's and held it close.

Lance gave her a reassuring glance.

Tory laughed.

"Never in a thousand years! But if Lance really wants to speak to Kara, perhaps he would rather we give him the opportunity alone.

"Suppose you come over here and sit on the sofa beside me. You must be specially good to me when Kara is away."

Seldom was Lance awkward in manner or apparently at a loss for words. Now he appeared embarrassed and silent.

"No, please don't go away, Tory, you and Dot, not if you can bear remaining. And you must, to brace up Kara. The truth is I had nothing special to say to her, but the other afternoon I composed a little piece of music in her honor as a farewell. I am wiser tonight and she shall not be afflicted with it."

Again Lance's brown eyes were slightly sarcastic, slightly challenging.

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"How can you care for my poor efforts after the serenade?"

Tory made no answer save to attempt to lift the cover from the piano, so that Lance was compelled to come to her assistance.

"Sit down, Lance," she ordered quietly, attempting to place the stool in position. "I am glad to say the old piano was tuned only a few days ago, although no one here uses it. You know you want to play what you have written for Kara, so why pretend otherwise?"

Tory's manner left no chance for argument, so Lance, with a whimsical smile of agreement, meekly obeyed.

He sat under a light from a reading lamp, the two girls standing beside Kara's chair.

"My musical composition has the advantage of not being long and is merely an attempt to express our sorrow over Kara's departure, our faith in her good courage and our splendid hope for her return. Yes, and perhaps a little of my envy that she goes to the city of my dreams. Perhaps after all I shall meet her there."

Lance's words trailed away into silence as his slender fingers touched the keys in a simple melody of farewell.

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